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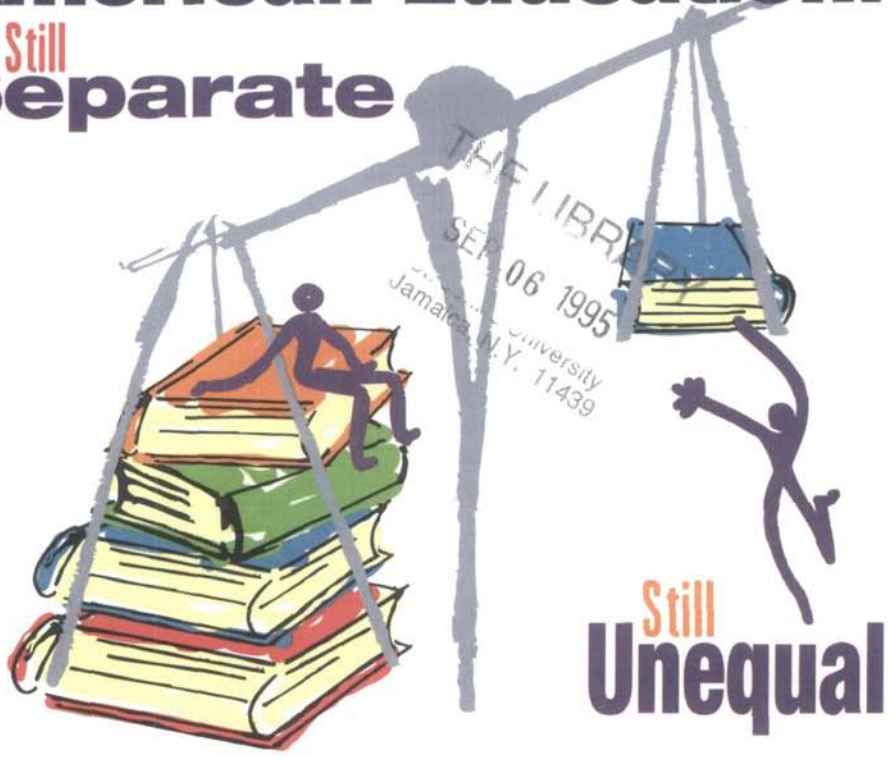

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American Education: Still Separate, Still Unequal

Fall 1995

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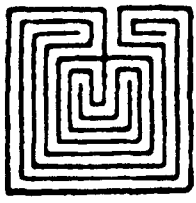

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Preface to the Issue "American Education: Still Separate, Still Unequal"

JUST OVER TWELVE YEARS AGO, an extraordinary document appeared, with a title calculated to gain attention: *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform,* in passionate and elegant prose, told a tale no one concerned with the future of the American democracy could fail to heed. The report, in magisterial tones, began: "Our nation is at risk. Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world." The document went on to say: "This report is concerned with only one of the many causes and dimensions of the problem, but it is the one that undergirds American prosperity, security, and civility. We report to the American people that while we can take justifiable pride in what our schools and colleges have historically accomplished and contributed to the United States and the well-being of its people, the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people. What was unimaginable a generation ago has begun to occur—others are matching and surpassing our educational attainments."

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In imagery that was immensely compelling, the Report said: "If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war. As it stands, we have allowed this to happen to ourselves. We have even squandered the gains in student achievement made in the wake of the Sputnik challenge. Moreover, we have dismantled essential support systems which helped make those gains possible. We have, in effect, been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament." *A Nation at Risk* was saying, in effect, that the public school system of the country as a whole was in crisis, in the suburbs as in the inner cities, though obviously not in the same ways. The document was a clarion call for action.

When one considers that this declaration is only a little more than a decade old, one is obliged to ask whether comparable words of warning must be issued in every decade. Is this the justification, then, for publishing a special issue of *Dædalus* whose provocative title suggests that the risk to the nation is by no means over? Has the "separate and equal" myth that once justified racial segregation in the South been replaced by a "separate and unequal" reality that imposes insidious distinctions and creates vast injustices in almost every part of the country? Is this the fundamental weakness of the American system of education that claims to be concerned with equity? Or, is it also that events in the country and the world since 1983 call for the reconsideration of a set of educational objectives and policies formulated during the first years of the Reagan administration? Are there certain new conditions—one forbears to call them "crises"—that the National Commission on Excellence in Education, the authors of *A Nation at Risk,* failed to anticipate? The answers to all these questions must be an emphatic "yes."

The collapse and extinction of the Soviet Union—incontestably the most important event of the last decade, perhaps of the whole post-World War II period—has removed one of the major incentives to education reform. So long as the Soviet Union existed and was perceived to be a menace to the United States and the other democracies, its atomic arsenal and missile capability threatening the world with Armageddon in its modern meaning—a final conflict ending in universal destruction—the problems of American

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education could be rendered in a vocabulary legitimated by two destructive twentieth-century world wars that had required the mobilization of whole populations. The national defenses of the country were thought to be at hazard, and an essential ingredient of almost every security proposal was some sort of education reform. Whether the object was to improve American science, develop the country's technological capability, or simply create a society more physically fit and more able to cope with foreign dangers, the incentives for creating greater competences in foreign languages and mathematics, for learning about areas of the world once thought to be irrelevant to the United States, owed much to the existence of the Soviet Union. The vocabulary of education reform was that of the "Cold War"—terms like mobilization, readiness, preparedness, and "educational disarmament" spoke of the existence of a communist enemy.

All these are yesterday's preoccupations. Despite the mass media's ritual references to the "crisis" in Bosnia and elsewhere, to unstable conditions abroad, the nation's attention is almost wholly riveted on itself. The national agenda has become aggressively domestic, and relates much more to taxation and budget paring, with "getting government off the nation's back," in the popular idiom, than with anything that can be specifically called the education of America's children. Yet, it is social issues, and any number of the moral and ethical questions that relate to abortion and crime, health and welfare, divorce and unemployment, and dozens of other scarcely less grave matters that must be seen to frame any serious educational debate about schooling. While the country prides itself on its rapid recovery from the recent world economic recession, its percentage of governmental GDP expenditures for social issues ranks below—in some instances significantly—that of all members of the European Union, though it can claim to be spending a somewhat larger percentage than Japan and Australia. Such statistics have little interest for many who sit in Congress, concerned mostly with what they perceive to be the problems created by welfare cheats, drug addicts, and other undesirables. The proposition, recently advanced by the Council on Families in America, that there has been a divorce revolution—"the steady displacement of a marriage culture by a culture of divorce and unwed parenthood"—is one that many would sub-

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scribe to, but few think it necessary to translate this incontrovertible fact, with its huge implications for the education of America's children, into policies relevant to the twenty-first century.

Today's fin de siècle, as America is experiencing it, may be seen by later generations as a time of social stupor and political myopia. If the country has been largely able to contain its "triumphalism" with what it perceives to have been its remarkable victory over "international communism," the absence of anything resembling the Soviet threat has altered the political landscape, making other purported foreign hazards considerably less compelling. The fact that history is not "kind to idlers," that the world has become "one global village" where "determined, well-educated, and strongly motivated competitors" are threatening an older, American economic and intellectual ascendancy—the words of *A Nation at Risk*—is still believed by many, but not with anything approximating yesterday's passion. If the National Commission on Excellence in Education emphasized the dangers emanating from a hard-working and well-educated labor force in Asia and Europe, and if these and analogous arguments remain persuasive today, they lack yesterday's potency. Even the steady erosion of the value of the American dollar is not creating the apprehension that is warranted.

The United States is less overwhelmed by what the Japanese or the Germans are achieving, which is not to say that they no longer believe what the Commission said in 1983: "The risk is not only that the Japanese make automobiles more efficiently than Americans and have government subsidies for development and export. It is not just that the South Koreans recently built the world's most efficient steel mill, or that American machine tools, once the pride of the world, are being displaced by German products. It is also that these developments signify a redistribution of trained capability throughout the globe. Knowledge, learning, information, and skilled intelligence are the new raw materials of international commerce and are today spreading throughout the world as vigorously as miracle drugs, synthetic fertilizers, and blue jeans did earlier. If only to keep and improve on the slim competitive edge we still retain in world markets, we must dedicate ourselves to the reform of our educational system for the benefit of all—old and young alike, affluent and poor, majority and minority."

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The proposition that "Learning is the indispensable investment required for success in the 'information age' we are entering" is still on offer, as will be obvious from much contained in this issue of *Dædalus*. Yet, in today's political climate, it is increasingly uncommon to hear that the nation's prosperity depends on a well-educated work force, which can only be nurtured initially in its public schools. Many argue as if public education is expendable, that if schools do not quickly measure up to what are perceived to be yesterday's standards, parents will be invited to send their children to private facilities, helped to do so by some form of governmentally-supported voucher system. The unwillingness to look candidly at America's broken families, urban and suburban, or the burned-out inner cities of the country, to acknowledge that the further "ghettoizing" of America's urban public schools can only exacerbate existing educational problems, is part of a larger national denial. Whatever progress has been realized from the alarm sounded by *A Nation at Risk,* and no one would deny that some beneficial changes have occurred, there is no evidence that it has made America's schools more equal, less separate. It is not only the inequality between urban, suburban, and rural, between schools overwhelmingly populated by minority children and those having only a token representation, if any, that needs to be considered, but the more fundamental fact, rarely expressed, that social class and race divides children from the beginning—cash determines where children go, how well they are educated.

America's universities, still among the best in the world—something that cannot be said for either America's primary or secondary schools, public or private, with relatively few exceptions—know this only too well, and are acutely aware of the grave crisis in K-12 education. To date, some are trying in various ways to address the problem, understanding its complexities, knowing how much their own future, not to speak of the country's, depends on those already enrolled in school. If there has been no concerted university effort in respect to the reform of schooling, comparable to what was achieved in the nineteenth century with the establishment of the land-grant universities, which did so much to create the agricultural revolution that made this segment of the American economy so modern and so prosperous, there has also been nothing to compare with what the universities contributed in war and

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peace, helping to rid the world of at least a few of the more offensive twentieth-century totalitarian regimes, creating a more healthy and long-lived population both in this country and abroad. When America's universities, public and private, pay more attention to their schools and faculties of education, investing more heavily and more imaginatively in both, leading their professors out of their isolation, their professional ghettos, uniting them with those committed to teaching and scholarship in the arts and sciences, they will take the first steps towards awarding that group and the school teachers they train the respect merited for work that is both arduous and essential. Universities, in making this a principal charge, are serving themselves, but the greater service is, of course, to the American democracy. The universities, if they elect to do so, can accomplish a great deal in renewing public school education in the country, but it is foolish to underestimate the difficulty of the task.

Such issues are not being sufficiently discussed at the moment. Instead, the talk is mostly of markets and competitiveness, but the rhetoric employed is no longer that of *A Nation at Risk*. It is both more acerbic and more self-serving. If the United States has disappointed Japan many times in recent years, and if its vaunted democracy has seemed somewhat more fragile and disordered than its self-advertisements in the immediate post-Hiroshima decades led the Japanese to believe, the more remarkable fact may be that Japan has, in the last years, lost a good deal of its luster for Americans. Japan's own economic recession, but even more the violence associated with the Tokyo subway incident and all the other individual and highly-publicized incidents of violence, have helped dispel the notion that Japanese society, in many ways exemplary, achieved its remarkable and unprecedented prosperity with a new brand of capitalism, based ultimately on a rigorous and demanding educational system. So long as Japanese children scored so much better on various tests than their American peers, and a strong yen mocked an ever-wavering and declining dollar, Japan's safe, crowded, and clean city streets seemed to provide the text for a sermon that compared the vigor and orderliness of Tokyo with the decadence and chaos characteristic of crime-ridden New York. Exaggerated tales were told and believed, and many related to what were thought to be the more distinctive

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features of a remarkably stable industrial society, self-confident and prosperous.

Comparable tales, though less frequently told, explored the virtues of the German educational system, and also of others thought to be in many ways superior to the American. The implications were clear; the United States could not continue in the way it was going. The economic interests of the country dictated the need for education reform; the future well-being of the society required it. In the late 1990s, such arguments are still being heard. The difference, however, is that the "romance" about foreign accomplishments, the exaggeration (and fear) of the remarkable economic progress and prowess of others, is somewhat abated. Neither Japan nor Germany, Korea, Singapore, France, or Italy—or the European Union as a whole—seems as threatening to American preeminence in today's world as they did a decade ago. In this almost cavalier underestimation of the world abroad, as in the American mass media's studied disinterest in that world, except when it suddenly turns violent, the true nature of the country's new "isolationism" is revealed.

This new isolationism is not simply political. Its cultural, intellectual, and educational dimensions are too rarely spoken of, but they may be as significant as any considered by those who retain some concern with NATO, Bosnia, the United Nations, China, or any other major foreign policy issue. The determination of some very articulate Americans to imagine that "multiculturalism" is the nation's major problem, that its successful resolution will in some way usher in a new age of tolerance and mutual esteem, ignores the fact that it can never serve as a substitute for an understanding of the equally complex and intrusive world that exists outside the United States. The new inward-looking America, preoccupied with circuses in its courtrooms and congressional hearings, increasingly cut off from the rest of the world by the banality of its interests, has not yet realized that neither its pop culture nor its consumerism—exports or imports—can serve to give it any lasting security in the postcommunist world. The United States, like every other nation, is required to live by its wits, and it has yet to understand how much that depends on its educational system.

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Those conditions alone would make the task of education reform in the late 1990s very different from what it was in the early 1980s or in the long years of the Cold War. In forgetting (or minimizing) yesterday's foreign hazards, there is an explicit insistence that the country must now turn to its domestic problems, too long neglected in favor of sorting out the world's problems. The excessive self-righteousness of the attitude, characteristic of those who believe that the time has come for a new political agenda that abandons the liberal nostrums of yesterday—the New Deal, the Fair Deal, and the so-called Great Society, all unceremoniously relegated to the dustbin of history—is profoundly ahistorical. It ignores, intentionally or unwittingly, the nation's experience for the whole of the twentieth century, mocking its complexities, denigrating its accomplishments. It makes World War II "ancient history," the Korean War a "non-event," and the Vietnam War an event best forgotten. It minimizes issues of race and social class and defines the two century-old American preoccupation with liberty and equality in terms so narrow and confining as to do grave injustice to the divisions that continue to plague the country. It reveals also the country's remarkable penchant for forgetting, believing the past to be dead, "bunk," in Henry Ford's inimitable phrase. "Missile crises," like "long hot summers," may have been the condition of yesterday—for those too young to have known the 1960s even such references have little meaning—but in today's political environment the risk of riot, like the risk of atomic war, has receded into a void, capable at best of summoning up a few phrases, a handful of photo images.

The historical innocence of what historians may one day come to see as this brass age, or in Winston Churchill's more memorable phrase descriptive of the 1930s, "the locust years," is apparent in the country's remarkable capacity to forget yesterday's "crises." Many examples come to mind. Thus, for instance, the findings of Otto Kerner, a former Governor of Illinois, invited by President Lyndon B. Johnson to lead a nonpartisan commission to inquire into disorders that originated in Newark and Detroit in 1967, that spread quickly and alarmingly to other cities as well, is today almost forgotten. The Commission's findings, insofar as they are recalled at all, exist only as a single phrase: "Our Nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white, separate and

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unequal." The country's collective memory, one of its more fallible faculties, has only slight recall of the Kerner Commission Report, which in three terse sentences expressed opinion common to the 1960s, rarely heard or believed in 1995. In the Commission's words: "Violence and destruction must be ended—in the streets of the ghetto and in the lives of people." The Report, more controversially, also said: "What white Americans have never fully understood—but what the Negro can never forget—is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it." These, the words of a group predominantly composed of white men, were made more poignant by the testimony of Kenneth Clark, a black educator, who, reporting on earlier riot commissions, following major urban disturbances with considerable loss of life in Chicago in 1919 and Harlem in 1935 and 1943, observed quite simply: "I must again in candor say to you members of this Commission—it is a kind of Alice in Wonderland—with the same moving picture reshown over and over again, the same analysis, the same recommendations, and the same inaction."

In the 1960s, many wished to believe that the "inaction" was ending, that the War on Poverty, like the Civil Rights legislation, would do much to end the separate and unequal conditions that blighted so much of American life, and not only in the South. That belief, in however attenuated a form, survived through the 1970s and into the 1980s; it scarcely exists today. To say this is not simply to argue that questions relating to health, the environment, growing income disparity, drug addiction, and crime, together with the more obvious manifestations of racial, religious, and ethnic divisions and bigotry, are giving us a new appreciation of the complexity of America's social and economic dilemmas; it is to say something of much greater import. *A Nation at Risk,* if properly understood, is not simply a comment on the inadequacies of the country's elementary and secondary schools; it needs to be read as a metaphor that describes the country's overall problems.

The National Commission on Excellence in Education, chaired by David Gardner, labored in an intellectual and political environment dominated by the decades-old preoccupation with the Soviet Union, but also by growing fears about foreign economic competition, and a recognition that social injustice remained a blight—

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all were thought to be facts of American life. Indeed, it was no longer just the issue of blacks being disadvantaged and discriminated against, but of whole classes of men, women, and children living bleak lives because of the stigma that attached to their race, color, class, or ethnic origin that made Americans determined to end the inequities of an earlier age. Hence, the enormous importance given the theme of access to educational opportunity in *A Nation at Risk*, which argued, quite simply, that "All, regardless of race or class or economic status, are entitled to a fair chance and to the tools for developing their individual powers of mind and spirit to the utmost. This promise means that all children by virtue of their own efforts, competently guided, can hope to attain the mature and informed judgment needed to secure gainful employment, and to manage their own lives, thereby serving not only their own interests but also the progress of society itself."

These sentiments accorded perfectly with the plea that "all segments of our population give attention to the implementation of our recommendations." Warning against the expectation of sudden change, those who formulated *A Nation at Risk* went out of their way to say: "Our present plight did not appear overnight, and the responsibility for our current situation is widespread. Reform of our educational system will take time and unwavering commitment. It will require equally widespread, energetic, and dedicated action." In the words of the National Commission on Excellence in Education, "Help should come from students themselves; from parents, teachers, and school boards; from colleges and universities; from local, State, and Federal officials; from teachers' and administrators' organizations; from industrial and labor councils; and from other groups with interest in and responsibility for educational reform." Those who penned these words imagined that politicians, academics, ordinary citizens, parents, and so-called "captains of industry" could be mobilized to work together for ends that would serve the whole society. The object, in short, was for everyone to acknowledge a responsibility to the young. The document, though few saw it as such, was a final accolade to certain specific liberal values, deliberately phrased in a way not to cause offense to the Republican President, Ronald Reagan, who had called the Commission into being.

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When, in April 1991, Reagan's successor, George Bush, aspiring to be known as the "Education President" unfolded his own plans, all the traditional references to education as the royal road to progress figured prominently. In his words, "Education has always meant opportunity. . . .Nations that stick to stale old notions and ideologies will falter and fail. . . ." That was the recognizable language of *A Nation at Risk,* but when the President went on to give the details of his bold new program, a quite new voice, more scolding, almost haranguing, was heard. Bush said, "The time for all the reports and rankings, for all the studies and the surveys about what's wrong in our schools is passed. If we want to keep America competitive in the coming century, we must stop convening panels to report on ourselves. We must stop convening panels that report the obvious." The President's words admitted of only a single interpretation; there was no need for further study; we know all that we need to know; the time has come to act, to achieve great things quickly. In this, as in so much else that he said, Bush uttered the exact obverse of the truth. Yet, in his plea for "new schools for a new world," he sounded a populist note that would become increasingly common, amplified in Congress and elsewhere after his own short lease on the White House expired. Calling for new methods and yardsticks, he showed only contempt for those who measured progress in terms of money spent. In a powerful reprimand to those in Congress and in state legislatures who insisted on appropriating larger funds for education, he said: "we spent 33 percent more per pupil in 1991 than we did in 1981—33 percent more in real, constant dollars—and I don't think there's a person anywhere who would say. . .that we've seen a 33 percent improvement in our schools' performance. Dollar bills don't educate students."

What, then, did the President recommend? Believing that education "depends on committed communities determined to be places where learning will flourish; committed teachers, free from the noneducational burdens; committed parents, determined to support excellence; committed students, excited about school and learning," Bush argued that there could be no "renaissance without revolution," that education policy had to focus on students, that schools ought to be judged by the performance of their students. Schools, students, and teachers—all of them—had to be

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made accountable for academic results. Announcing his goals for the year 2000, less than a decade away, he named six: "to ensure that every child starts school ready to learn; raise the high school graduation rate to 90 percent; ensure that each American student leaving the 4th, 8th and 12th grades can demonstrate competence in core subjects; make our students first in the world in math and science achievements; ensure that every American adult is literate and has the skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship; liberate every American school from drugs and violence so that schools encourage learning." Could anyone cavil at these very commendable ambitions? Yet, could anyone seriously believe that they were achievable by the year 2000, or, indeed, by 2020 or 2040? Were they not simply the rhetorical expostulations of a politician wearing the slightly worn robe of a preacher, unwilling to look candidly at the America he pretended to describe?

Like those who wrote *A Nation at Risk,* Bush acknowledged that "we must accept responsibility for educating everyone among us, regardless of background or disability." There is no reason to believe that any member of the Commission would have been less explicit in proclaiming that "if we want America to remain a leader, a force for good in the world, we must lead the way in educational innovation," or that "if we want to create hope and opportunity in the bleak corners of this country where there is now nothing but defeat and despair, we must dispel the darkness with the enlightenment that a sound and well-rounded education provides." These were all noble sentiments, to be achieved in the 1991 Bush formula by modest means, including the defining of "New World Class Standards for schools, teachers, and students in the five core subjects, math and science, English, history and geography." Parental choice of schools would be encouraged; in theory, the best schools would survive, the others would reform themselves or go to the wall. As the President saw it, "Every American has the right to vote, the right to decide where to work, where to live." Ignoring the realities that existed about unemployment, single-parent families, segregated housing, and no-income families, but warming to his theme, he added: "It's time parents were free to choose the schools their children attend." That approach, he said, "will create the competitive climate that stimu-

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lates excellence in our private and parochial schools as well." Competition was the key. American education, in Bush's mind, had to be reinvented. Very explicit in its acceptance of the need for "standards," somewhat less open about what the prospects for public school education in the long run were to be, but positively lighthearted and sanguine in its description of short-term possibilities and prospects, the 1991 program never wholly captured the public's imagination.

Still, it provided the rhetoric for those who wished to prove themselves patriots, concerned with what they perceived to be the decline in the nation's morals. In its explicit preoccupation with saving money, increasing the accountability of both schools and teachers, compelling a more unbiased and critical judgment of student academic performance, it spoke the language of fiscal prudence, which, together with its determination to impose sanctions on those who failed in their duties to teach or learn, guaranteed its appeal to certain groups. While some who studied the proposals were critical, not only of the hyperbole that attached to the unveiling of purportedly "revolutionary" schemes, but also of the proposed remedies, it was difficult to take issue with what seemed to be a serious federal commitment to create new schools and to devise procedures for improving education in those already established. In an increasingly populist and nationalist political environment, where dollars and cents mattered enormously, where the American public was constantly represented as long-suffering, bearing the double burden of excessive taxation and exaggerated bureaucratic controls, considerations that had once made their appeal to social conscience no longer had a serious claim on the nation's attention. The *Nation at Risk* agenda was substantially amended, in ways not sufficiently noted or remarked on at the time. In the absence of a Sputnik, or of a Soviet state capable of creating universal terror, where "revolution" in the streets, as distinct from that contained in the President's rhetoric, was no longer thought to be an imminent danger, and where America's sordid inner cities remained quiescent, if neither salubrious nor safe, it was easy to believe that American K-12 education, altered by the introduction of standards, would be improved through a strange new brew—a combination of carrots and sticks, the promise of limited new federal funding and the threat of sanctions.

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Implicitly and explicitly, this issue of *Dædalus* questions so sanguine a view of what is called for in our present predicament. That such a limited program, so lacking in any sense of what the incentives to learning can be, what the facts of social mobility are, or what the economic costs of an illiterate or barely literate work force, of whatever race, will certainly be, shows intellectual political sloth, dangerous for its evasions, immoral for its pretensions. Without choosing to employ the overworked twentieth-century cliché, "crisis," a *Dædalus* volume that bears the title "American Education: Still Separate, Still Unequal" asks whether a society socially and racially divided in the American fashion can long continue to prosper, whether economic interests alone will not ultimately compel the nation to give serious attention to the massive educational inequalities that exist, the injustices they perpetrate. It asks also whether there is in fact today the understanding of America's children that ought to guide politicians, citizens, parents, and educators. Is it possible that we know a great deal less about America's children than those who would have us cease our researches believe?

This is a matter of the greatest consequence. The American adolescent of 1995 is not the adolescent that Stanley Hall described in his most influential work in 1904; nor is the Oedipus conflict, as Sigmund Freud imagined it, accepted as it once was; to read Erik Erikson's *Childhood and Society*, originally published in 1950, and to reflect on his chapter on "mom" is to realize that the species, at least in its American form, may be virtually extinct. Nostalgia for the past, even respect for its learning, cannot ignore the fact that schools have changed, along with neighborhoods, families, and all the other institutions that once sustained children. The social changes are more significant, perhaps, than the biological, but both need to be thought of, and it may be instructive that some psychiatrists have chosen to neglect neither. This was as true in the past as it is in the present.

More than three decades ago, at the height of the Cold War, Erik Erikson recommended to the Editor of *Dædalus* that consideration be given to the publication of a special issue entitled "Youth: Change and Challenge." Erikson, reflecting on what he called "three deplorable developments" that made it difficult for

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Americans to encompass the problems of youth, argued for the kinds of studies that made adolescents comprehensible to adults.

In his carefully-constructed prose, Erikson spoke of "the clinical direction that focuses our thinking on the *problems* of youth and assumes that if we analyze the worst of these problems and suggest remedies we have done our part." Erikson knew that such an attitude existed not only in his own profession, among his fellow psychiatrists, but was common in the country. Youth was not simply a "problem" that waited to be ministered to. He worried also about what he called "the discrepancy between this narrow focus on deviant minorities, together with their exotic or extremist counterparts in other countries, and our general ignorance regarding the general problems of youth in an industrial age." Implicit in this remark was Erikson's belief that too few understood what being a child, an adolescent, or a young adult in an industrial society implied, and not only what problems it created. Finally, and not insignificantly, given the date, Erikson spoke of the Communist countries, which ignored "all the neurotic, individualistic, and deviant possibilities. . .staking everything on the probability that there is something in the development of a common industrial technology and a word-wide communication that will give a new sense of freedom and a new source of creative imagination to the youth coming into its own, even in the most backward countries." Was it not incumbent on those who wished to understand twentieth-century youth to concern themselves with all three of these issues?

The last, for reasons that have to do with the extinction of the Soviet Union, no longer commands our attention. The other two may be even more relevant today than they were in the early 1960s. The "general problems of youth in an industrial age," seen in something other than purely psychiatric terms, must concern all who write about education. It is for this reason, but also for many others, that a recent work, despite its title, merits attention by anyone interested in the reform of schooling, and of education more generally. Michael Rutter, in his recent collaborative book, *Psychological Disorders in Young People,* tells a tale that every European and American ought to ponder. While Rutter is not especially interested in the United States—the American is only one of several modern industrial societies that he treats—the sta-

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tistics assembled, like the observations made, describe a world significantly different from any that existed when World War II ended in 1945. Given the specific interest of this issue of *Dædalus*, it is particularly important that attention be given to what is said about the United States. Thus, to take one example, pregnancy rates for fifteen to nineteen year olds in the United States are the highest in the world, more than twice as high as those of the United Kingdom, almost three times as high as those of Sweden, and more than six times as high as those of the Netherlands. Abortion rates are equally out of scale: twice as high in the United States as in Sweden, substantially higher than those of Finland, the third highest in the world after the United States and Sweden. Adolescents and young adults in the United States are ten to fifteen times more likely to die from homicide than their peers in other industrialized countries. As for violent death rates for children as a whole, they are substantially higher in America than in the countries of the European Union. While motor vehicle crashes cause nearly three-quarters of all the accidental deaths in the United States, firearms cause most of the rest.

When one turns to health, the rise in sexually-transmitted diseases has been greater in the United States than in any other of the major established democracies. To cite but a single example, there was a three to four-fold increase in gonorrhea between 1960 and 1988 among ten to nineteen year olds. While AIDS has not yet become a common ailment among American adolescents, about one-fifth of all AIDS-related deaths in the United States occur among men and women aged twenty to twenty-nine, suggesting that the original infection occurred either in late adolescence or in early adulthood. While the incidence of AIDS in Europe is rising, it is not even beginning to approach the levels in the United States. Given that their concern is principally with adolescents, Rutter and his colleagues say nothing of AIDS-infected infants, the high rate of infant mortality, or indeed what the experience of those children born in poverty in the United States proves to be in the first five years of their lives.

Describing a fin de siècle world significantly altered by very high levels of divorce, they know that statistics cannot begin to describe how children are affected by divorce, the resultant disappearance of a parent, the hostilities and recriminations frequently generated

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by divorce, not to speak of the acrimony that often precedes it. Nor, for that matter, are they prepared to judge what the effects of a growing proportion of working mothers in the United States has meant for the well-being of children or adolescents. As they acknowledge, research on that kind of issue yields very contradictory results. Yet, the experience of American adolescents is different from that of their European peers, demonstrated as much by statistics on teenage pregnancies as by other indexes. If teenage pregnancies are more frequent in the United States than elsewhere, the explanation appears to be not so much a difference in the level of sexual activity, in behavior, as in the lack of readily-available contraceptives and family-planning advice. That black American adolescents become sexually experienced at an earlier age than their white counterparts is generally known. The gender differences for both blacks and whites are also known. Although girls reach puberty two years earlier than boys, fifteen year old boys are nearly three times as likely to have had sexual intercourse as girls the same age. Over a mere twenty years, the proportion of eighteen year old girls who have had premarital intercourse has doubled. Poverty, social disadvantage, and family disintegration are known to be related to an earlier engagement in sexual activities, but the relative importance of each is impossible to establish. Yet, all these conditions relate intimately to what students learn in class, rates of school absenteeism, and the incidence of delinquency.

When it comes to crime, certain things that have been known for a long time have been reconfirmed in the last half century: teenagers and young adults are the most common offenders in the population. While the victim survey data in much of the democratic world suggest very substantial increases in burglary and motor vehicle theft, small increases for robbery and assault, and also for rape, recent data for the United States show decreases in several of these categories. The fact that waits to be explained is why young blacks are arrested and imprisoned more frequently than whites, and whether these statistics reveal a disproportionate share of criminality among blacks, or whether they suggest a bias in law enforcement. That, for obvious reasons, remains a subject of very great controversy. What is not disputed is that blacks are substantially more likely to be victims of robbery and burglary than whites, or that blacks are many times more likely than whites

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to be either victims or offenders in homicide cases. Nor does anyone seriously doubt the strong relationship between unemployment and criminality. Rutter and his colleagues, while acknowledging this, do not believe that poverty and inadequate housing have been among the more important causes of increased crime in the last half century. Nor are they prepared to say that crime, in the aggregate, has been caused by rising unemployment. Unstable employment results in certain individuals committing crimes, but it does not explain the larger phenomenon. This, a very controversial finding, is one that merits further study.

Questions also need to be raised about those who are persistent users of heroin and other equally dangerous drugs, and what consequences their addiction has for the high levels of violence that cause such turmoil in cities as different as London and New York. As the authors explain, contrary to what many citizens believe, "Most adolescents and adults who use illicit drugs do not commit predatory crimes. About half of delinquent youngsters are delinquent before they start using drugs, while the remaining half start concurrently or after." Citing evidence to support this finding, they conclude that the prevention of delinquency may be a more effective device for curbing or at least containing the problem of drug use by adolescents than programs specifically designed to teach youngsters to say "no" to drugs. This, obviously, is not their language, but it is the kind of folk wisdom that passes for political intervention in the United States. The question, obviously, is how delinquency in industrial societies, including the American, can be prevented, or at least diminished, and what schools can do to reduce the levels of disorder and violence common to both the classroom and the city streets. That it calls for a much broader engagement of many public authorities goes without saying, but how all this plays itself out in Peoria, in a time when government is both feared and disparaged, is what is not immediately self-evident. Given what we know of the hazards of drug addiction, and the social impairment it creates, and not only for adolescents, a heavy burden is created for the schools, but it is not resolved by simply saying that they must restore the discipline of yesterday.

It is when policy questions of this kind arise that one realizes how complex are the causes of psychological distress in the young, and why the issue of explaining criminal behavior is so beset with

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difficulty. What is one to say, for example, of the hypothesis that economic growth and the large increase in the quantity of consumer goods designed for the young and desired by them may itself help explain the high levels of contemporary criminality? No such theory would be accepted by those who know only too well the large commercial benefits to be realized through sales to the young, in markets especially created to whet and satisfy their appetites. Nor, for that matter, are those who believe that harsh and certain punishment—lqng terms of imprisonment—will deter crime be greatly moved by evidence, however strong, that imprisonment only increases the likelihood of recidivism. Imprisonment of adolescents, Rutter and his colleagues argue, may not be a deterrent in the way those who advocate strong sentencing imagine. The proposition that the effects of stricter law enforcement are likely to be mixed, that it will always be difficult to quantify them, goes against common opinion. So, also, with any number of other beliefs on what remedies are appropriate for the stressful conditions common to children in the contemporary world, why the causes of the anti-social behavior remain so obscure. It is not only in the United States that the baneful effects of television, for example, are thought of and deplored. Though research on that specific subject, particularly as it relates to violence, may be more advanced in the United States than elsewhere, it is enormously difficult to regulate television, and even more difficult to know precisely what the connection between observed violence and violent acts by youthful offenders may in fact be.

Lest it be thought that the problems of American schools are confined principally to the inner cities, where delinquency is common and truancy is a daily condition, the situation in the more affluent towns and suburbs of the country does not always provide the model that the less advantaged would be well advised to follow. The incentives to serious study—to anything that could be mistaken for learning—in many American schools, including a considerable number able to recruit principally from middle-class families, are depressingly few. Where so many colleges and universities, despite their published claims to be oversubscribed, are in fact compelled to scrape the bottom of their applicant barrel to fill their classrooms, they are not in a position to challenge their "feeder schools," demanding that they improve their curriculum

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or see their students barred. Whole systems of public education in individual states are substantially less demanding than they ought to be. Lest it be thought that the private schools are uniformly better, this is a myth that deserves to be laid to rest. Some are incontestably among the best in the country, able to compete with the best in the public sector; others are insufficiently funded, inadequately staffed. The distance between the best in both the public and the private sectors and those that are essentially remedial, custodial, is perhaps as great today as it has been at any time in the nation's history. This is too rarely acknowledged. So, also, there is too little attention given to the flight from the difficult, from subjects that call for sustained effort, that cannot be mastered by flights of fancy. Again, it is not at all obvious that schools abroad are uniformly more successful with children who come from stable families, who in fact are judged more severely in national examinations at once more exacting and in many ways more traditional. If residential segregation, by income even more than by race, has created a two-class system of education, it is by no means clear that the affluent are being well served educationally, which is not to say that the young or their parents are complaining. So long as their schools provide the desired passport to college, many think them to be serving the one purpose that really matters.

This, then, is the dilemma of those who believe that American education is seriously defective in all sorts of ways, who know that major reforms are required, who accept that they involve something more than a commitment to change the schools by making them more "accountable." Those who are not afraid to call themselves "reformers" recognize that major innovations are required, but know that this cannot be achieved by the simple device of altering the curriculum, imposing new sanctions to enforce better performance on students and teachers alike. Nor is it likely to be achieved by creating a new "bogey" to take the place of the recently extinct Soviet Union. The early 1980s formula, making Japan or several of the Western European states appear to be intellectual and economic giants, whose educational practices wait to be emulated, will not carry great weight in today's American political climate. Nor can very much be expected to result from complaining of the lack of funds for America's schools, arguing

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that large appropriations once made for defense might now more appropriately be diverted to education.

The statistics on expenditures for schooling suggest that while a handful of European states expend a greater percentage of their GDP on education than the United States—Sweden and the Netherlands, for example—those countries most frequently cited as educational "models," Japan and Germany, spend considerably less. Those who cite these figures do not ask what the classroom expenditures are, why they are so much less in the United States than in other democratic societies. In education as in health, bureaucracy consumes too great a part of the funds appropriated, leaving too little for essential services.

In the absence of a declared enemy—the Soviet Union—and in the absence of what are presumed to be more efficient democracies, whose educational programs have appeal, the threat of foreign competition is unlikely to have great immediate resonance for the American public. In these circumstances, it will not be fear of foreigners that will stimulate change, nor even shame, but something substantially more powerful: social and economic necessity. The country cannot continue with the present educational inequality. It is too divisive, too destructive of human potential, too unjust. If those facts are properly perceived, and are placed in a context that looks not only at what the country's present economic condition is, but what it is likely to be if the present practices prevail into the first decades of the twenty-first century, it is just possible that the country will begin to find its way out of the social and political labyrinth that presently imprisons it. The American public must be made aware of the precariousness of its inattention to the danger signals that are so evident to those who see the country from abroad.

They know how much the country in the past depended on its pool of talent being constantly replenished with immigrants and the children of immigrants. They know also that countries that once sent great numbers, in Europe and Asia, are less inclined to do so now when their own economic situations are so vastly improved. In theory, the new immigrants will rise as rapidly as certain of their predecessors did, but an even superficial gaze at what passes for vocational education in the United States at the end of the century, in most of the country's public high schools,

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suggests that the ascent for the greatest number will not be very rapid. It is not enough to say that the Germans handle these matters better. How, in a society like the American, can responsibility be delegated? What can the federal government do? How much can individual states, coping with their own very real fiscal problems, be expected to do? Has the time come to reinvent "local politics," to resolve issues that are beyond the competence of those who sit in high places in Washington or state capitals? Does that, however, not require a view of citizenship that takes for granted that one of the principal purposes of public education, apart from creating the skills necessary for both work and leisure, is to encourage civility, to preserve the social cohension that is the bedrock of any stable democratic society?

As Bernard Williams, the English philosopher, has recently written: "One of the most persistent fantasies, at least of the Western world, is that there was a time when things were both more beautiful and less fragmented." This is not a fantasy that many who have written for this issue of *Dædalus* share, though it is all-too-common with those who, seeing themselves as "representative" men and women, constantly mourn the American world of innocence and virtue that they believe to be lost. There is no such mourning in these pages; neither nineteenth-century nor pre-World War II America is held up as the model society that educators must strive to recover so that the country may begin to emulate its sage educational practices. Nor is there any suggestion that the "Cold War" years provided the kinds of instructive experiences that must now be called on to help the country out of its social distress. Instead, there is a yearning for candor; the authors of this volume do not pretend that instant solutions for the country's educational problems exist, nor that they will be accomplished by acts of political will at the highest levels of government. A much more complex task awaits the nation's citizens.

Because the Convocation and the memoranda it inspired provided an opportunity for the exchange of views on what is needed if America's children are to become better educated, more adequately prepared for the world of the twenty-first century, it is useful to indicate the very substantial agreements reached, drawing attention also to some of the important differences that persist. It is not insignificant that two of the brief essays bear the titles

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"Silences" and "Education Reform: What's Not Being Said." Each addresses a number of sensitive issues too rarely acknowledged that may be as important as any number of others commonly discussed. Until the reticences common to American educational discourse are admitted, and until some effort is made to address legitimate public concerns, whether relating to violence or nonacademic performance, there can be no resolution of the real differences that exist today about why American schooling appears to be flawed, or how its inadequacies may be remedied. The rhetoric that all children can learn to the same high levels is not believed by some who write for this issue, who differ about the virtues of tracking and disagree about what needs to be done to make school teaching a more esteemed profession. Indeed, until there is greater candor about students, teachers, and schools, and until a more serious effort is made to situate each in an American context that takes account of the nature of the American economy, not to speak of its politics and its culture, there will only be finger-pointing, with one or more "enemies" singled out for reprimand.

The "reticences" and "silences" so common to our age need to be taken seriously. But so, also, does the constant reiteration of a handful of propositions, frequently cited, but seldom made more compelling by their constant repetition. Thus, for example, while it is a fact that the physical plant of many American schools must be recognized as deplorable, a far greater number, and not only in the more affluent suburbs, are decidedly modern. What makes American schools so very different from those of Germany, for example, is precisely the distance between the good and the bad, not only in their physical facilities, but also in the training of their teachers. If the Germans are almost too concerned with "licenses," having specific requirements for every major profession, including teaching, entry is by that fact alone made difficult and complex. American requirements seem almost cavalier by comparison. In certain states, qualifications for a teaching certificate remain minimal; yet, the annual teacher turnover, both in the public and the private sector, is startling. Long vacations everywhere and improved salaries in many places do not appear to compensate for what teachers feel to be a lack of respect for their efforts. While it is by no means certain that the profession will gain respect when the teacher is given "power," defined by some as the ability to

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decide what is taught in the classroom, this is not a remedy that wins universal assent, least of all from those who accept the need for "standards," who know that in a mobile society, like the American one, the absence of all uniform expectations breeds indolence and mediocrity.

If schools attempt to do too much, instructing in too many subjects, as many agree is the situation today, it is not at all apparent what subjects may be safely sacrificed, or who ought to make these decisions. While there are numerous references to parents, and to what the "community" must do to bestir itself on behalf of children, it is difficult to find a very explicit consideration of what the appropriate limits of such interventions need to be. Yet, each touches the fundamental issue of "who decides" and what the nature of the public commitment to children in a democracy like that of the United States must be. The importance of the public schools is constantly alluded to—and the dangers to the system are suggested—but it is not always apparent what can be done to change a situation where a preponderant number of the public schools, like many of the private, are both race bound and social-class bound. In these situations, can a common citizenship be striven for? Indeed, can a concern with improving skills for the kind of industrial society likely to exist in the twenty-first century be accomplished when vocational education is so little valued and so little thought about? The German example comes to mind: both in their schooling and in the associations established between schools and prospective employers, their practices are fundamentally different from any that exist on this side of the Atlantic. While there is constant reference to the "factory model," to its purported obsolescence both in industry and in education, the issue of encouraging discipline and responsibility—even if not of the old-fashioned kind—constantly intrudes. How much attention must be paid to the educational agenda that politicians, knowing of the public's concern with crime, drugs, child abuse, and the like, insist on? How can the "tyranny of low expectations," the "infantilizing" of America's children, and the lack of recognition that it is not only the children of the inner cities who are being short-changed in our separate and unequal education system be overcome? What new alliances need to be forged to accomplish social goals that are today scarcely alluded to?

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These are the kinds of issues that figure prominently in the Convocation transcript but also in the memoranda printed in this issue of *Dædalus*. Until a more conscientious effort is made to renew the teaching profession—until there is a more deliberate concern with how American society has changed, and why the educational practices of the 1930s will no longer suffice, nor even those recommended more recently—rhetoric will substitute for research. The diversity of the American population is not substantially greater than that of any number of other modern, industrial democratic societies. Frankfurt, London, and Paris cannot be represented as a precise replica of New York, in population terms, but it may be useful to recall that not one of them can today claim homogeneity in racial, ethnic, religious, or social class terms. Each, in quite different ways, is striving to give educational opportunity to varied populations of young people, the children of immigrants but also of families able to claim a citizenship that predates the century. In Europe, the problems of succeeding in this vast and novel enterprise are acknowledged, and experimentation is proceeding, as it is in the United States. Nowhere, to this date, has the idea that schooling is a public responsibility, that it requires something more than a willingness to provide access to schools for millions who in another age would have been denied that right been abandoned. Yet, to listen to some who speak of public schools in America today is to imagine that all (or most) are contaminated, failing in their basic duties to the children in their charge. This is not a view held by those who have contributed to this issue of *Dædalus*.

The issue is composed of two segments: the first is a report of a Convocation held at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in the spring of 1995, attended by men and women with very different perceptions of what is most urgently needed to reform K-12 education. Their remarks provide a critical overview of the situation that now exists. Many who attended that Convocation agreed to supplement their spontaneous contributions with short essays—memoranda, in effect—and these are presented in the second segment. They are, in most instances, revised versions of memoranda prepared immediately after the Convocation. Finally, a word about the versos that appear throughout the volume. In January 1971, the Assembly on University Goals and Governance,

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a body created by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, responding to what many perceived to be a very serious crisis affecting universities both in this country and abroad, published a report with eighty-five "Theses." Though they were specifically addressed to problems of the university, many of them have relevance to schools more generally. It seemed only appropriate to include certain of these theses in this issue.

Thanks are due to those individuals and institutions who have done so much to make this special issue of *Dædalus* possible. It all began with Gerald Holton assembling a very small group that met in Cambridge to discuss what the Convocation might be, and who might be asked to participate. Patricia Graham, Harold Howe II, Howard Hiatt, and Henry Rosovsky, with Gerald Holton and David Gardner, are owed a very special thanks. So, also, is the Rapporteur, Daniel Goroff, whose task was not made easier by great numbers of participants, all very anxious to be heard. The Office of Education and the National Science Foundation provided the funding that made the meeting at the House of the Academy possible. Because these two agencies set the whole process in motion, creating a forum where none had previously existed, their vital contribution must be noted. Needless to say, neither bears any responsibility for the recommendations or observations, sage or radical, contained in the volume. Nor, for that matter, do those foundations (The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, and The Spencer Foundation) who have contributed funds to allow this special issue of *Dædalus* to be more widely circulated. Our object has been to give maximum attention to educational issues vital to the nation, to initiate a debate, civil and serious, of a kind not now being conducted. Finally, and most importantly, thanks are due all who helped with this project, who accepted to write under quite impossible deadlines, and were understanding even when the demands made by the Editor seemed unreasonable.

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Gerald Holton

Foreword

ANYONE INTERESTED IN THE FATE OF EDUCATION at the precollege level in the United States today is likely to feel bombarded from two directions: the undiminished stream of reports and plans from governmental and private sources, and the barrage of anecdotal stories, largely dismal ones. Moreover, from one season to the next, it seems that the very bases of previously accepted institutions are put in question, from financing curriculum reform or school lunches to privatizing the public school system itself. Demographic shifts and sudden budget constraints leave new and bewildering problems. The latest results on cognitive development clamor for attention, often in vain. By a variant of Gresham's law, even the occasional good news tends to get lost in the pandemonium of debates.

Against this background, I suggested to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences' project "Initiatives for Children" (directed by Howard Hiatt) that the time was right for assembling some of the most thoughtful practitioners and observers in K-12 education, bringing the small but diverse group together for an exercise that in other circles is often called a "Retreat." Ours would be an unprecedented gathering of experts and practitioners, an assembly of immense resources, knowledge, experience, and passions. Some would be educational figures of international renown, some would be teachers fresh from the classroom, and some would be administrators or scholars in education. But most would not yet have had the chance to meet face-to-face to share their visions, concerns, and doubts. Leaving behind the crisis documents stacked high on their desks, they would come together for a long weekend in the quiet of the House of the Academy for an open-hearted, far-

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ranging exchange of views, a conversation on the main problems of education in America.

On the basis of their very different experiences and positions, they would try to come to a consensus worthy of the nation's attention, to identify problems that for the moment are beset by unbridgeable differences, to agree, if possible, on the topics that call for urgent action and/or research.

The focus was to be on two main issues above all: *How can the quality and practice of learning by children be improved? How can the quality and working conditions of teachers be improved?*

Each of these issues has three facets: the academic, the institutional, and the social. This logic would result, so to speak, in a 2x3 matrix of chief topics. For example, when considering the improvement of the quality and practice of learning by children, the academic facet raises such questions as: "Will the National Standards movement help significantly? How can standards be rendered so important that students in fact meet them?" Similarly, regarding institutional goals, one might inquire into the merits of large schools as opposed to small, of public schools and the alternatives to them. With respect to social goals to facilitate learning by children, one might ask how society's commitment to all children can be secured so that something other than rhetorical promises are made.

Whether such a unique and ambitious Convocation could in fact be assembled was by no means certain. To my delight, almost everyone we invited agreed to come. Both the National Science Foundation and the Office of Education provided the funding. (Their support does not necessarily imply that the agencies agree with our statement.) Responding to the invitation sent out over the signature of David P. Gardner, who kindly agreed to act as principal convener, thirty-eight persons met at the Academy for two and one half days in March 1995.

The Report that follows was prepared by Daniel Goroff, acting as rapporteur, and myself as co-convener; it benefited from Stephen Graubard's shaping of the final draft. The document is essentially an account of a conversation on education, drawing on high points of the meeting as well as on papers precirculated by a number of the participants. Where necessary, the recorded remarks have been slightly edited, reordered, and summarized, occa-

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sionally without attribution. We selected the most salient portions of the extensive record and subjected them to a thematic analysis, assembling and emphasizing major points even when the discussion of these matters was dispersed throughout different sessions.

Ours is emphatically not another of those documents of projects that, with a large staff and many meetings, aspires to lay down a set of prescriptions that the nation is expected to follow. Rather, we are auditors, listening to frank (and sometimes explosive) expressions of opinion and debates among the members of a remarkable and disparate group seated around a great circle of tables, where both intimacy and spontaneity were possible. The Report allows us to share in the personal concerns of those whose lives are given over to considering the theoretical as well as practical controversies about American education today that are proving to be so divisive. The hope is that such a Report can have some influence in clarifying the options that exist, the choices that need to be made. Complementing the Report is a series of short papers, commissioned by the Editor of *Dædalus* after the Convocation.

The tacit commitment that brought the group together came close to embodying the sentiment so eloquently expressed in the last paragraph of John Stuart Mill's essay, "On Liberty":

> "The worth of a State, in the long run, is the worth of the individuals composing it; and a State which postpones the interest of the mental expansion and elevation. . .will find that with small men no great thing can really be accomplished; and the perfection of machinery to which it has sacrificed everything will in the end avail it nothing for want of a vital power which, in order that the machine might work more smoothly, it has preferred to banish."

As participants listened to the individual interventions at the Convocation, one theme emerged as salient: there is a desperate need to elevate to one of the highest places on the nation's agenda the education and care of America's children. The Report is dedicated to the proposition that discovering new intellectual resources for achieving that task is essential.

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NOTE

In reading the Report, it may be helpful to be aware of its internal structure, which is roughly indicated by the following sequence of main themes:

The National Stake in Education

Putting education among the highest priorities
What education will future jobs require?
What is the *national* interest in local education?
What does the public want from schools?
Education is much more than schooling.
An estrangement between the generations?
The myth that parenting is not work, and teaching is easy
International comparisons of achievement
If money is local, can there be a national strategy?
The specter of anti-intellectualism and complacency
Agreeing on a set of goals
The perseverance of the "American Dilemma"

Improving the Practice and Quality of Learning

Positive achievements submerged in shrill debate
The disconnection between educational research and practice
Believing in students helps them believe in themselves.
Active understanding versus memorization of facts
Social reform, not just education reform
"Fixing the schools is not the same as fixing the kids."
The need for National Standards, and their problems
Context standards to be paralleled by performance standards
Non-academic factors impinging on learning

Improving the Quality and Work Conditions of Teachers

Problems of educational institutions mirror those of society.
Recruitment and effectiveness depend on the quality of teachers' lives.
The particular concern of teacher preparation in science and mathematics
Where is the feeling of urgency?
Where does the money go?

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The use and abuse of time
The system's lack of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation
Strong people are attracted if given responsibility.
Professionalization of teachers
How can technology help?
Compromise between hierarchy and free enterprise
Think globally, act locally
School-to-work path
The tyranny of textbooks and tests
Less is more?
Schooling, democracy, and the country's future

PARTICIPANTS, CONVOCATION ON MAJOR PROBLEMS IN EDUCATION, MARCH 3–5, 1995

Bruce Alberts, President of the National Academy of Sciences

Gordon Ambach, Executive Director of the Council of Chief State School Officers in Washington, D.C.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Professor of Human Development in the Departments of Psychology and Education at The University of Chicago

Linda Darling-Hammond, William F. Russell Professor in the Foundations of Education and Co-Director of the National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools, and Teaching at Teachers College, Columbia University

John D'Auria, Principal of Wellesley Middle School in Wellesley, Massachusetts

Paul R. Dimond, Special Assistant to the President for Economic Policy, The White House

Richard Elmore, Professor of Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education

Joan First, Executive Co-Director of the National Coalition of Advocates for Students in Boston, Massachusetts

David Gardner, President of The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, President Emeritus of the University of California and of the University of Utah, and Co-Convener of the "Convocation on Major Problems in Education"

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Howard Gardner, Professor of Education and Co-Director of Project Zero at the Harvard Graduate School of Education

Daniel Goroff, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Mathematics and Associate Director of the Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning at Harvard University

Patricia Albjerg Graham, Charles Warren Professor of the History of Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and President of The Spencer Foundation

Stephen R. Graubard, Editor of *Dædalus* and Professor Emeritus of History at Brown University

Howard Hiatt, Director of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences' project "Initiatives for Children" and Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School

Gerald Holton, Professor of Physics and History of Science at Harvard University and Co-Convener of the "Convocation on Major Problems in Education"

Paul D. Houston, Executive Director of the American Association of School Administrators in Arlington, Virginia

Jeff Howard, President of The Efficacy Institute in Lexington, Massachusetts

Harold Howe II, Senior Lecturer Emeritus at the Harvard Graduate School of Education

John F. Jennings, Director of the Center on National Education Policy in Washington, D.C.

Joyce Justus, Assistant Director for Social and Behavioral Sciences, Office of Science and Technology Policy, Executive Office of the President of the United States

Susan Adler Kaplan, Supervisor of English in the Providence, Rhode Island Public Schools

James A. Kelly, President of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards in Detroit, Michigan

Madeleine M. Kunin, Deputy Secretary, US Department of Education

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R. M. Latanision, Professor of Materials Science and Engineering and Chairman of the Council on Primary and Secondary Education at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Katherine P. Layton, Mathematics Teacher at Beverly Hills High School in California

Katherine Merseth, Executive Director of the Harvard Project on Schooling and Children at Harvard University

Linda Nathan, Co-Director of the Fenway Middle College High School in Boston, Massachusetts

Patrick O'Rourke, President of the Hammond Teachers' Federation in Indiana

Lauren B. Resnick, Director of the Learning Research and Development Center and Professor of Psychology at the University of Pittsburgh

Sharon P. Robinson, Assistant Secretary, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, US Department of Education

Henry Rosovsky, Lewis P. and Linda L. Geyser University Professor at Harvard University

Robert Schwartz, Director of the Education Program at The Pew Charitable Trusts

Paul Schwarz, Co-Director of the Central Park East Secondary School in New York

Robert Semler, Regional Administrator, Employment and Training Administration, Department of Labor, Boston, Massachusetts

Albert Shanker, President of the American Federation of Teachers in Washington, D.C.

Theodore R. Sizer, Chairman of the Coalition of Essential Schools, Director of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform, and University Professor at Brown University

Roger Soder, Associate Director of the Center for Educational Renewal at the University of Washington

Thu-Hang Tran, Kindergarten Teacher at Mather Elementary School in Boston, Massachusetts

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Gerald Holton and Daniel Goroff

Where is American Education Going? Report on a Convocation

POLITICS OF EDUCATION

IF, AS ALL MEMBERS OF THE CONVOCATION AGREED, the education of America's children needs to be placed high on the nation's agenda, the most pressing problem is how this can be done. It is clearly not enough to debate the respective roles of federal, state, and local authorities, nor to believe that the current national political climate will last forever. Indeed, given the authority that exists in educational matters in states and local communities and the seriousness of the social problems that afflict American society, education must soon again figure prominently. Madeleine Kunin, Deputy Secretary, US Department of Education, in her opening remarks, voiced a theme that would reverberate through the next three days: "We are dealing with the most important responsibility of any society—of any species for that matter. The primary responsibility is the education and rearing of the young in order to continue the life of the species." In the United States at this moment the political debate, at least as seen from Washington, revolves around the question of whether all children can be educated to a high standard. In Kunin's words, "Those who say 'no' really envision a very different kind of democratic and economic system than those who say 'yes,' and that is why the voices

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for 'yes' have to be heard." Because the "yes" voices are not being heard sufficiently, and seem for much of the time to be almost mute, Paul Schwarz, Co-Director of the Central Park East Secondary School in New York, spoke of the need to "make the arguments resonate across a substantial portion of the American population."

Schooling in "fundamental democracy" seemed a prime obligation to Schwarz, as it was to Roger Soder, Associate Director of the Center for Educational Renewal at the University of Washington, who spoke of the moral, social, and political dimensions of teaching in a society that relies on civil discourse, that knows itself to be a pluralistic society. Lauren Resnick, Director of the Learning Research and Development Center and Professor of Psychology at the University of Pittsburgh, understanding the importance of devising a "compelling vision," warned that in its absence the opportunity for a "historic convergence of educational goals—a just society, a sound economy, and personal fulfillment"—would be lost. "Were that to happen," David Gardner, President of The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, said, "the consequences would be grave." He believes that if the general public perceives that there is in fact an unrelieved decline in the purposes and quality of American education, support for the public schools, particularly in the middle class, would be withdrawn. The "divided society" that so many Americans have warned against for several decades would indeed become a reality.

ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS

Very early in the discussions the issue of work—employment—came to the fore. If, as so many argue, jobs are certain to be more demanding in the future, calling for greater skills, something like a lifetime of continuous learning has to be contemplated. Robert Semler, Regional Administrator for Employment and Training at the Department of Labor, believes that such a program will have to look "far beyond the classroom walls to integrate all—the business community, teachers, educators at the university level, and the family itself." Resnick warned that "the promise of future jobs may turn out to be just a hoax" if communities do not strive to inject rigor in their educational offerings, making it possible for

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graduates to move about, to profit from the opportunities presented by this society. Paul Dimond, Special Assistant to the President for Economic Policy, was no less explicit when he said, "You can look at any number of studies that show that the ticket to higher wages in this country, to higher living standards, is higher skills. Studies shows that for each year after secondary education there is a 6 to 12 percent increase in earnings." Arguing that there is now too little connection between skills learned in school and those required in the workplace, Dimond contrasted this situation with the one that prevails in Europe, where apprenticeship systems are common. In his words, "We must build bridges between employers and future employees so that the latter can in fact understand what is out there in the real world and see that their learning has some relevance."

PARENTS' ATTITUDES

If the theme of employment opportunities figured early, and if others returned to it frequently, that opened by Albert Shanker, President of the American Federation of Teachers, proved to be no less compelling. Shanker, concerned with what parents think of their children's schools, noted that recent studies, including those of the Public Agenda Foundation, suggest that despite instances of highly visible explosions, often noted and commented on by the mass media, "there really are no multicultural wars among parents." Their wishes are very precise; in Shanker's words, "Parents are clear about what they want: safe, orderly, academically rigorous schools—traditional schools—with consequences for students who fail to meet standards." Also, contrary to what some believe, "there is a very high correspondence," he said, "between what parents and the public want and what teachers want." This is not to suggest that existing conditions are satisfactory, nor that the relative equilibrium that now exists will be continued into the future, but it does say that there is no fundamental disagreement about elementary and secondary school education between those who are professionally delegated to provide it and those whose taxes support it.

Harold ("Doc") Howe II, Senior Lecturer Emeritus at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, listening to all this, reminded the

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Convocation that "schooling and education are very different things." A child's education is made up of many activities, most of them occurring outside the school. The teacher cannot fail to be concerned with all of them, seeing the student as an individual, seeking to understand something of his or her family life, of the communities to which he or she returns each day. The child's performance in school, and not only on tests, is to a significant extent determined by these external factors. A child's opportunities, or lack of them, relations with parents and others—these are data that a teacher cannot ignore. What makes the teacher a "professional," Howe said, is precisely that such matters are recognized to be relevant. In his words, "You can bet your life that the scores that the kids get on tests have a lot to do with, or are even controlled in a high degree by, the family situation, by the community situation." While having no interest in lashing out at "school reformers," he went on to say, "The school reform movement has tended to operate on the false assumption that you could fix the schools, so that the schools can fix the kids, no matter what the hell is happening in their families and communities." Howe lived under no such illusion. Something more than "school reform" was needed in America. That theme, with numerous glosses, would be repeated many times in the next days.

Among those attending the Convocation who had written extensively on the theme of motivation—another subject that figured prominently—was Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Professor of Human Development in the Departments of Psychology and Education at the University of Chicago. Insisting, as he had in many of his published works, that schooling was only one element in determining how children develop and grow, he reinforced the points made by Howe. His initial interventions, concise and pointed, admitted of only a single interpretation: families and communities matter immensely in the education of children. "How motivated children will be in school, how curious they will be, how interested they will be, and how much they will be permitted to learn depends on how supported they are in the home and how safe they feel in the neighborhood." The theme of "safety" was one that came to be talked of repeatedly, though it was not always apparent how the issue of violence could be dealt with, and whether the schools could in fact make any significant contribution towards

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reducing what all recognized to be the disordered and dangerous condition of America's streets, particularly in the inner cities. If, as all insisted, the schools were not "islands," protected by invisible moats from the tumultuous conditions outside, what messages did they need to communicate that were not being sent by others, least of all by television?

R. M. Latanision, Professor of Materials Science and Engineering and Chairman of the Council on Primary and Secondary Education at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, agreeing with Howe and Csikszentmihalyi that "life teaches children outside of school," made another point that others would in time take up. Schools, for him, existed to do more than disseminate information. They existed to give social understanding, to make it possible for individuals to live together in amity, working for common purposes. It was significant that Latanision emphasized how much Bell Labs, one of the nation's premier scientific enterprises, was concerned with recruiting individuals whose competencies extended well beyond a knowledge of science. In work, as in life, he said, an understanding of social purpose, of the different kinds of skills that need to be prized, the diverse capacities that need to be valued, had to be acknowledged. In his view, such competencies were as frequently influenced by the extracurricular activities that an individual engaged in as by the more explicit instruction received in classrooms. Was Latanision saying, in effect, that the curriculum of a school, however crucial to the educational enterprise, was not by itself sufficient? If so, the question of what other values needed to be inculcated, and how that could best be done, remained.

THE ROLE OF TEACHERS

Nothing said during the meeting in any way denigrated or diminished the role of teachers—indeed, there was a constant concern to support their central roles in the lives of children—but this did not lead any to underestimate the importance also of the relations of children to other adults, or, as several would have said, to a community of adults. Recent studies, frequently cited, that suggest that the average American teenager spends only five minutes a day alone with his or her father, and that it is the adolescent's peers

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who determine what is thought and done, take on additional gravity when one considers how much the dissemination of information and values in earlier civilizations and generations depended on the kinds of family and neighborhood communication that have virtually ceased to exist.

The generational rupture, of great concern to Csikszentmihalyi, also worried Paul Houston, Executive Director of the American Association of School Administrators, who spoke of the psychological damage suffered by both adults and children as a consequence. From his years as a superintendent of schools in Princeton and Tucson, he recalled the cynicism characteristic of so many middle-class youth. As for the children of poverty, he noted their nihilism and wondered what the future of American society would be given these sentiments. While adults might go on prating about "our children," and politicians might continue to make their ritual bows to the next generation, even as they reduce appropriations for schools, the estrangement between the generations posed a problem that could not be ignored.

John D'Auria, Principal of Wellesley Middle School in Wellesley, Massachusetts, responding to this discussion of adults and children, noted the existence of two myths that he thought particularly pernicious: that parenting is not work and that teaching is easy. The view that people on welfare "do not deserve benefits if they are not working—the assumption being that taking care of children, in the case of a single mother, for example, is not work"—is constantly repeated in the recent debates on welfare policy. A comparable sentiment, D'Auria said, exists in respect to teaching: "What we must figure out is how to convince the American people, including parents and teachers, that parenting and teaching are incredibly complex and important tasks."

INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS

Taking his cue from this discussion, Albert Shanker asked why Americans, in considering their educational institutions, are not more circumspect, comparing their own achievements with what others accomplish abroad. If, he argued, American businessmen became aware that others were doing better, they would feel some need to learn from that foreign experience. Why do American

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educators not feel the same compulsion? Why do they pay so little attention to what others are doing, particularly when those countries seem to be achieving better results? Shanker said businessmen would be aggressive, perhaps to the point of seeking to recruit some of their foreign competitors, engaging in a kind of espionage. But, he noted, we do "little educational espionage." "In spite of a number of revisionist accounts," Shanker continued, "there is overwhelming evidence that other democratic industrial countries are doing much better than the United States with their students—top, middle, and bottom. What are we doing about it? Mostly foolish things, like looking to vouchers, privatization, or changes in school governance to improve student achievement. There is no evidence that these will work. What we are not doing is looking to see what all the successful countries are doing that we do not do. They all have a common curriculum, assessments that measure whether students have mastered the curriculum, and high stakes for students. Those who make it get into college or technical school. Those who fail, do not. High stakes make students work hard and achieve more. Students in the United States do not work hard because they do not have to in order to get into college or get a job."

On the question of how well American children perform in comparison with what is achieved abroad, there was some disagreement. Howe, for example, urged caution in looking at comparative test scores. In his view, any comparison of schools had to be accompanied by a comparison of the respective societies, with attention paid also to the accuracy of test scores. Noting the immense difficulties of making such comparisons, he observed that "the most recent tests have been more accurate, even if accompanied by a whole lot of footnotes that nobody ever reads." Latanision, agreeing that the differences in achievement are very much in dispute, noted that no one seriously questions that America's children are underachieving, that they are not in fact being led to reach for even the diminished standards that now exist. In his view, this was in some measure a cultural issue, and ought to be looked at in that dimension. John Jennings, Director of the Center on National Education Policy, made the matter even more explicit when he said, "American kids spend less than half as much time on basic subjects, compared to those in other industrialized coun-

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tries. If this is true, one need not wonder why they are not doing well. There really is no mystery."

NATIONAL CONSENSUS

Robert Schwartz, Director of the Education Program at The Pew Charitable Trusts, responding to this discussion, said, "I really do believe that we need a national strategy in education. And the question is how, in a country where 95 percent of the dollars are at the state and local level, where statutory authority and the weight of local tradition determines so much of what is done, we can develop a national strategy." Schwartz observed that the country may be beginning to build nationalizing institutions outside the federal government and spoke approvingly of what two of the conference participants—Lauren Resnick and James Kelly—were doing to achieve that purpose. If tensions might be expected to result from such efforts, and he believed they would, he thought the phrase used by Dimond—"bottom-up reform with collegial national inspiration"—exceedingly apt. It was essential, he argued, that the national commitment to education be preserved. In his words, "we need to keep public money, not just the local money in Roxbury, flowing into Roxbury's schools. The public must feel that it is worth making such a commitment." Should the funding become entirely local, this would be a disaster for equity. While local decision-making was possible, it ought to be guided by an agreed-upon set of outcomes that the society as a whole approved of and adopted.

James Kelly, President of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, like others in the room, saw the need for such a commitment, but worried about the growth of anti-intellectualism in the United States, which he thought exceedingly dangerous: "At the same time that we are trying to build academic strength in schools and other educational institutions there is a very strong resurgence of anti-intellectualism in American society that is undermining it, pulling out the cultural basis for life." Lest his remarks be thought simply a criticism of those outside the schools, Kelly remarked also on the sentiments within: "There is a self-indulgent, narcissistic group of people that we are trying to deal with in school. To them, entertainment is everything." To make

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matters worse, Kelly suggested, "drugs are more pervasive in schools than we would like to acknowledge." Schwartz, following on this, said, "It is a continuing mystery why there seems to be so much complacency, particularly in middle-class communities, about the schools. I think we need to frighten the American electorate in a more effective fashion about the costs of simply continuing on the path that we are on. The dilemma is how to do that in this current environment without stampeding people away from the public schools and giving aid and comfort to the various kinds of privatization schemes that are out there."

Because there is so much criticism in certain circles of how teachers perform, of what they do or fail to do, the intervention of Thu-Hang Tran, a kindergarten teacher at the Mather Elementary School in Boston, was immensely telling: "I would like to be able to work toward clear goals. I am willing to be accountable for my pupils' performance, if I can be clear about what society wants. I am not producing cars or shoes; I am having a hard time understanding how to produce products capable of individual learning, with social and moral values, able to compete in the international economy, speak two languages, and get on the Web and communicate with other people. Society has to agree on a set of goals. I want to meet them."

DISCRIMINATION

Among the many responses to this cry from the heart—and they extended over the whole of the Convocation—that of Jeff Howard, President of The Efficacy Institute, had particular salience. Describing what goes on in the Chrysler automobile plant in Detroit, he spoke of "the two products of an automobile manufacturer." In his words, "Only one is good cars, and the other is a group of workers who can make good cars, with the skills and capabilities that a manufacturer requires to turn out a good car. What that means, essentially, is that they have worked out a human resource development system, no small feat in itself. In Detroit, at Chrysler, it is being done in an inner-city plant with a largely black work force. They have a clear, simple, and compelling objective." For Howard, what has been missing in many of the proposals for education reform was precisely a "consensus" about the objectives

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to be achieved by such reform. In the absence of such explicit agreement not very much could be accomplished.

Howard had raised two fundamental issues: the absence of consensus and the relevance of race. Linda Nathan, Co-Director of the Fenway Middle College High School in Boston, saw the need to extend the matter: "We have not come to a consensus about the importance of certain issues: how racism and sexism still pervade our schools." Joyce Justus, Assistant Director for Social and Behavioral Sciences, Office of Science and Technology Policy, was even more emphatic: "We need to think about what race, class, and ethnicity mean to our teachers, what it is to be a white teacher in an African-American school, how to help the teacher in that situation." In a comment that moved the group both by its passion and its truth, she said, "Race is a dominant factor, and let's not pretend that race, class, and ethnicity are interchangeable, because they are not. And those of us who happen to be non-white, know that they are not. And when you tell us that they are, we stop talking to you." Nathan, responding to this, spoke of how the tracking of children, ostensibly for other reasons, often ends up resulting in "color-coded classrooms."

THE TONE OF THE DEBATE

Madeleine Kunin, in her opening remarks, had alluded to the problem of discrimination, knowing how serious it was. She, however, had also noted another situation, less serious perhaps, but no less galling. Even when the educational news was not all bad, when certain progress was registered, it received little attention in the mass media. "As we look at the trends in the United States Department of Education," Kunin said, "in addition to individual success stories, which we do talk about a great deal, we look at the overall views, and we actually see some very positive trends. The gaps between African-American and white students in math, for example, has actually been cut in half between 1970 and 1990. Certainly, it is not yet where it should be. But the fact is, it is narrower. And when the Secretary of Education gave his State of Education speech several weeks ago, his message was, 'we are turning the corner.' Well, as you might imagine, that elicited a ho-hum response, as if we were only justifying our own existence. If

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you listen to the news, or read the papers, almost all the pronouncements are made by those out of power. They are being seen and heard; when those in power are asked to respond, they too often do so in a rather modest way. The critics play on and confirm public anxiety about education, and it is difficult to face them head-on."

In an educational debate that has become increasingly shrill, it is difficult to represent fairly the historic achievements of public schools. Patricia Graham, Charles Warren Professor of the History of Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and President of The Spencer Foundation, seeking to render that accomplishment in very concrete terms, explained how much American society, in the twentieth century alone, changed its views about what schools should be asked to do: "In the first quarter of this century, American society expected schools to assimilate the children of immigrants. The second period, roughly 1925–1955, was the era of progressive education, when we were trying to counteract some of the academic lockstep that had characterized the assimilation. From 1955–1983, we were mainly concerned with problems of access. In 1983, we had a new agenda. *A Nation at Risk* argued—I think appropriately for the time—that what we really needed were high levels of academic achievement for all children. I would point out that this fourth goal, coming at the end of the twentieth century, is the first one that has to do chiefly with academic achievement. The others were all social goals, which the society believed to be necessary, which the schools, to a significant degree, achieved. The schools, in the past, have met the goals set before them. I believe they will do so again, but it will require a strategy that focuses not only on the schools, but on the broader needs of children." Graham, as much as any of her conference colleagues, was acknowledging the enormous importance of social policy. Education reform, even when it emphasized the need for academic achievement, had to take account of what children were experiencing in their daily lives, in their families and neighborhoods.

Kunin, concerned to emphasize how one-sided the representation of school accomplishments had been, how distorted was the reporting on the effects of federal legislation, found significant the conclusions of a recent RAND Report that suggested that certain

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of the social investments were in fact paying off. In considerable exasperation, Kunin remarked, "We have been too cowed by the naysayers who claim that all the money is going down the tubes. Head Start didn't work; Chapter One didn't work; welfare doesn't work; social programs don't work." This, she implied, was cheap rhetoric; more objective research would yield information to correct such unfair judgments. John Jennings took the same view: "It is not a two-sided debate; it is shrillness on one side without the middle or the other side coming back. That is not good for the country."

In these and other comparable comments, there was an implicit understanding that those responsible for schooling were so preoccupied with what were incontestably real and serious problems that they found little time to inform the public of the good things that were happening. The result, inevitably, was a distorted debate. In his own intervention, Stephen Graubard, Editor of *Dædalus*, asked whether there was in fact any real public discussion taking place on educational issues. In his view, on fundamental questions relating to children and schooling—those that ought to be preoccupying the country—there were only silences. David Gardner concurred: "In short, we are less willing than we should be to take note of the promising efforts that are underway in many of our schools, and the real progress that has been realized in recent years. We ought to be bolder about asserting those, to achieve more balance in the debate, to give people a greater sense of encouragement than they presently have."

THE ROLE OF RESEARCH

Mention was frequently made of the importance of educational research, of what could be learned both about the past and the present. Linda Darling-Hammond, William F. Russell Professor in the Foundations of Education and Co-Director of the National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools, and Teaching at Teachers College, speaking of the "factory model" of public schooling, so prominent earlier in the century, said, "In the writings of the time it was suggested that if you gave people less training they were more compliant. Their schooling was also cheaper. So, to get low-paid and compliant teachers, it was better to provide less

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preparation rather than more, to give training that was instrumental rather than empowering. . . .In our school structures and governance we deliberately separated theory from practice and decision-making from implementation."

Theodore Sizer, Chairman of the Coalition of Essential Schools, Director of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform, and University Professor at Brown University, made an even more explicit demand for using the results of educational research. "Too often in education," he said, "our discussions go in the wrong direction. We usually start with existing mechanisms and ask, 'How do we do it?,' rather than starting with our increasingly arresting understanding about human growth and the development of learning, and then saying, 'Given what we know, from research but also from substantial experience in areas research cannot dent, what do we do with that?' Might not basic ideas about learning and schooling have to be somewhat different from those of the early part of the century?"

If the disjunction between research and practice was great—and several acknowledged that this was indeed the situation—it was nowhere more apparent than in the matter of tracking. On that subject, Shanker made a point that no one contradicted. He said, "For forty or fifty years we've had anti-tracking 'research' showing that tracking is bad. There isn't an educational leader or education professor I know of who favors tracking. Yet, all the educationally successful nations do it and get better student achievement than we do. Also, in spite of the anti-tracking 'research,' most schools do it and most parents favor it. Why? Maybe parents and teachers know something the researchers don't." Howard offered an answer when he said, "Let's talk bluntly. . . .You have stupid kids in the classroom and you have a few who are smart. Somebody who did some research comes into your classroom and says, 'we think you should teach them all together.' You know better than that, and as soon as the reformer leaves, you go back to doing what you know is the correct thing to do. That is what teachers do, and then you blame them for it." The proposition that parents and teachers may favor one policy, that researchers frequently argue for another, was not pursued.

A less controversial matter was raised by Henry Rosovsky, Lewis P. and Linda L. Geyser University Professor at Harvard

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University, when he suggested that research results concerning education were insufficiently disseminated. So, also, others argued, the experiences of classroom teachers were insufficiently taken into account.

THE ROLE OF EXPECTATIONS

Patrick O'Rourke, President of the Hammond Teachers' Federation in Indiana, recalling his own thirty years as a teacher, insisted on a truth no one disputed: "there is a direct relationship between learning in the classroom and how kids feel about themselves, about being there, about how the teacher relates to them." Howard stated the matter very concisely when he argued that innate ability did not control intelligence. As he explained, "The innate is fixed and unequally distributed. The new belief system says that confidence controls effective effort and effective effort controls achievement. Those who believe in themselves are able to commit themselves. And if they work, they learn. And as they learn, their confidence is increased. . . .That is what all great teachers understand, even if they cannot always articulate it in theoretical terms. They know that kids can learn, and they spend classroom time building confidence and shaping effort. The kids do learn and it becomes an upward spiral in that particular classroom." Daniel Goroff, of the Department of Mathematics at Harvard University, agreed: "Research in cognitive science shows that if you are explicit with your students about why you are teaching the way you're teaching, they will tend to retain and be able to use what you teach them much more effectively."

John D'Auria told a story that seemed to confirm the view that a child's learning is intimately related to what teachers believe to be possible: "The faculty I supervise told me that all kids cannot learn. When I insisted they could, their response was: 'You've got to be kidding. That's all well and good for people to say who have not been teaching. You don't have Johnny here, who is reading on a first-grade level and is in my eighth-grade class, or Mary, whose mother is an alcoholic and is known to abuse her daughter. Who are you to tell me what is possible?' My balloon burst. Later, when watching a girls' basketball game, I was immensely impressed by their ability. They were passing and dribbling between their legs,

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doing left-handed lay-ups, playing incredibly strategic defenses. How did this happen? How did the girls get to be so good? And then the answer came to me: the rules for girls' basketball had changed. It used to be thought that girls could not play as well as boys, and the rules emanated from that belief. When that belief was suspended, everything changed." Why was the story important? Because D'Auria used precisely the same principle in arguing for a curriculum that made demands on all students, that did not treat some as inferior to others. Over the course of years, he had shifted to saying, "let's suspend our disbelief and act as if all students can do serious academic study. Now, in this school all students take what used to be the honors courses, and there has been no dilution of standards."

Howe, remarking on the old maxim that said, in effect, "Tell me and I forget. Show me and I remember. Involve me and I understand," stressed the importance of children becoming "more active learners, planning their own education and doing something about it." In his view, helping students to "conceptualize what they will do, rather than just telling them—which they will forget anyway" was more than just a statement about the role of memory. Howard Gardner, Professor of Education and Co-Director of Project Zero at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, concurred: "Content disembodied from understanding is not worth much. Actually, most facts that we learn are really discipline neutral. It's no different to know how many miles the sun is from the earth than it is to know when the Battle of Waterloo was fought. Either is just a proposition that you learn. But to understand the basis on which these statements are made, and what kind of a network they fit into, that's what it is about. Understanding is very hard to achieve. Kids either come into the world with, or soon acquire, lots of misinformation and lots of very mischievous notions. We've often assumed that if kids can say the right things to satisfy us, those notions no longer exist, but they are there, and they are very robust. So, if we want to school the 'unschooled mind,' we have to abandon the notion that we can cover a lot of stuff. While I'm happy to hear that the revised standards coming out of the National Academy of Sciences have been well received, my guess is that they probably contain more than anyone could possibly cover in school. That is certainly true for all the other standards I've read

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about." The issue of trying to do too much—of cramming too many things into the curriculum—was one that figured frequently.

Patricia Graham, seeing the need to return always to history, commented on the educational record of the twentieth century. It was not so much the lack of high academic achievement that concerned her as the difficulties inherent in confronting children of such very disparate needs. In words she later incorporated into the essay printed in this issue of *Dædalus,* Graham said, "During this century Americans have continued to place extraordinary responsibility on the schools for a host of matters concerning children. Like the old all-purpose battleships, schools have attempted to respond to multitudinous demands put upon them. Their efforts have often been heroic, but their casualties have sometimes been high. I would argue that in the end, the schools are not well-equipped or adapted to serve all the many needs of American children, and that our children require and deserve support from a varied fleet, not just from a battleship. I say that because I don't want the conversation focused exclusively upon the issue of schools." To serve children, those who come from stable families and those who do not, the rich and the poor, black and white, in all these several categories, is not something that schools can do by themselves. They need the help of other institutions.

Susan Adler Kaplan, Supervisor of English in the Providence, Rhode Island Public Schools, found the argument compelling. She spoke of the public schools of Providence, where 23,950 children were enrolled, coming from families who spoke some sixty-seven different languages, with twelve students, on the average, being added each day. One-third were not in the country three years before. Absent cooperation from parents, health service agencies, or universities, there was little teachers could do to help their students.

The same view was taken by Paul Houston. Observing contemporary America, seeing a society that "in large part has abdicated its responsibility and handed it on to the schools," he asked whether schools could in fact perform all these myriad tasks. In his view, they could not. Schools, required to take on certain functions because others no longer cared to do them, were being told "to fix all sorts of problems that no one else is fixing" and that they

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cannot always fix either. Howe concurred. The great error, he said, was to believe that "everything can be done at school."

Shanker, contrasting the ways in which schools handled waves of immigrants earlier in the century with their more recent efforts to accommodate large numbers of foreign children, coming from every corner of the world, raised the fundamental issue of whether the effort should be to change the students to fit the schools as opposed to changing the schools to fit the students. As he explained, "If you keep the traditional school and let kids sink or swim, many will sink. As a result, there are calls to change the schools radically. But other countries have shown that students can succeed in traditional schools if they're given help."

STANDARDS AND EQUITY

The discussion of changing student populations, but also of the possible need for institutional innovations, led to a lengthy consideration of teaching practices and curricula. With respect to the latter, the recent introduction in many academic subjects of voluntary National Standards, intended to improve the school curriculum by making for a more uniform assessment and, in the minds of its supporters, assisting in teacher preparation, not surprisingly saw the Convocation divided. While a majority acknowledged both the need for and the potential usefulness of standards, a minority expressed concerns of one kind or another. Resnick, an ardent advocate of standards, put the matter very concisely: "Success lies not in the standards themselves but in how you use them. But you can't use them if you don't have them." Others, however, saw the movement as a vote of "no confidence" in teachers, an unwillingness to allow them the freedom to fix their own requirements, to make their own choices, in consultation with colleagues, about texts and methods. In one way or another, at least some seemed to be arguing for the teacher remaining sovereign in the classroom, not forfeiting valued professional independence.

Shanker, understanding their concern, sought to reassure them. He acknowledged that there are "a number of highly publicized schools with exceptional leadership and lots of creativity." He knew also that there were not many such schools, nor will there ever be many: "History shows that such schools don't last long.

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Nor are we sure that they get results. But we use this relative handful of schools as a 'model' and, sometimes, as an argument against standards." Being familiar with conditions abroad, he noted how often their success was linked to some system of standards: "Countries that have successful school systems don't base them on individual creativity but on common standards and a common curriculum, grade by grade. Each grade builds on the last. But in the United States, where student mobility is very high, we almost never know what the kids have learned before, and teachers have to spend huge amounts of time making sure students have the background for this year's work. American reformers emphasize creativity, while successful systems elsewhere have much more constraint. Moreover, standards don't stifle creative principals and teachers, but they do help to shape up more average ones."

That prospect appealed to Rosovsky who raised the question whether it makes sense for students to graduate from high school not knowing the basic chronology of American history, let alone European history. Might standards not help to prevent such obvious omissions? Accepting that tests do often drive the curriculum, though they appear to have little influence in inner-city schools where the concern is principally with keeping children in the classroom, he asked what could be done to make others treat teachers as professionals, acknowledging the critical nature of the work they do. This, again, was an issue constantly alluded to.

Describing what happened after World War II, when many industrial countries, including the United States, decided they needed a better-educated citizenry, seeing good reason to encourage great numbers to seek university admission, Shanker indicated how different were their several approaches to the issue of expansion. While some asked, in effect, "What can we do to help more students meet the standards, graduate from high school, and then go on to university," the United States felt no compulsion to lift its schools' standards to accomplish that goal. Today, some of the same attitudes persist. Given the number of university places available, and the extreme competition between colleges and universities, few are inclined to ask the schools to do more, to prepare their students more adequately for post-secondary instruction.

Because, among those who oppose "standards," there is a legitimate concern with what the imposition of authority from the top

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will do, how weaker and less able students will fare under such a system, some worry that the older equity agenda will be sacrificed to one that emphasizes competence, that ignores all other factors. The two, equity and competence, Schwartz insisted, must "not become competing goals." Richard Elmore, Professor of Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, reminding the group that the retention rate to high school graduation did not pass 50 percent until well into the 1950s, acknowledged that if a serious effort to educate everyone to a "much higher, more sophisticated, more diversified level" is to be made, a major transformation of institutions will have to be contemplated. The proposition that there could be "some kind of trade-off between standards and equity" was one that Elmore refused to endorse.

Darling-Hammond, in her remarks, indicated the complexity of the matter, seeing it as something other than simply being for or against standards. "It is often said that if we had clear standards we would not have inequality," but there is another view, that if you have "greater equality and capacity you may be able to use standards more effectively." Most other countries, she explained, have standards on the state or provincial level, and not on the national level. Also, they start with equally funded schools and a system in which virtually all teachers are qualified and have gone through a rigorous system of preparation. None of these conditions exist in the United States. Abroad, where the incentives for preparing for a teaching career are substantial, there are good reasons for able people to do what is necessary to qualify as teachers. The additional distributional incentives (i.e., higher salaries) to persuade teachers to accept posts in inhospitable places, such as the rural isolated regions of Australia, create conditions substantially different from any that exist in America. In short, those countries "start with a much more equal system and then add standards."

Those who argued that standards will produce greater equality did not persuade Darling-Hammond; the evidence, she says, does not confirm any such hypothesis. New York State, for example, she said, "has more explicit standards, with more explicit consequences than any other state in the country," but this does not translate into higher performance. "We have Regents' exams for higher-level diplomas. We have tests that every kid has to pass in

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order to graduate; there are other tests that allocate sanctions to schools, registration review, and all of those things. There are sanctions for kids; there are sanctions for schools. But there is also greater inequality in school spending in New York than in almost any other state in the country. We have more kids who are overage in grade and more dropouts than almost any other state. The rate of placement in special education has increased. I see no reason to expect that new or different standards will change that. They might raise a more appealing vision of education, but the equity side of it will not be improved. Rather, the biggest hope is in building teacher capacity, building teacher knowledge, and then building settings in which professional development and educational equality can occur. We can then use the standards well and actually get some greater student learning out of them."

STANDARDS AND AUTONOMY

The issue of what standards will do to increase or diminish the individual teacher's authority was constantly raised. Some imagined that they would help to give greater authority to teachers, but others saw it in a very different light. Sizer made his own position very explicit when he said, "Strong people want job authority over important things. Therefore, if you want strong people who will cause the kind of conditions to be provided that are needed, you will have to give them authority to make decisions over the heart of their work, which is the basic curricular enterprise." In Sizer's view, the issue of teachers' autonomy was central. Where teachers were denied that privilege, the most gifted tended to leave the profession; where they enjoyed it, they remained at their teaching posts. Praising the Fenway Middle College High School, he noted that it attracted the kind of people who were a credit to the teaching profession. "The school," he said, "is respectfully obstreperous in that it does its own thing, helped by its own sense of what is right for the kids."

Linda Nathan, listening to praise of her own school, said quite simply, "I want performance standards to emanate from the school building. I don't approach that by talking about standards at the national level. Teachers are insulted by these performance standards that are telling them that they are stupid. Teachers need the

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time to look at student work, to help kids individually. And they need the resources to do that, so that they can bring kids in under those very standards that they know exist. You've got to trust them as professionals." A comparable view was expressed by Joan First, Executive Co-Director of the National Coalition of Advocates for Students, who said, "The basic assumption is that if you raise standards, you are automatically going to have higher expectations for students. I don't think that's true at all. Kids tend to know that they are being confronted with high expectations when they are confronted with a teacher who believes in them. I don't know how a top-down imposition of standards, unaccompanied by better opportunities to learn, will result in changes."

Gordon Ambach, Executive Director of the Council of Chief State School Officers, recognizing that the standards movement has resulted in a variety of authorities issuing their own notions of what the standards should be, asked who would make the final decisions. Would it all be a matter of local decision? For Sizer, the more serious problem was the lack of anything that indicates attention to interdisciplinarity. In his view, "A student in a high school should have an intellectually coherent program. One of the curses of the current system is that it is incoherent. Even the physics course has initially nothing to do with the math course, much less art and English. The current debate over standards assumes the fixed position of the well-established, one hundred year-old subject matters. There is the source of the intellectual incoherence. To let history standards be apart from science standards is simply to continue the confusion. Unless there is some kind of interweaving of subject matter, such as was suggested in the American Association for the Advancement of Science's Project 2061, *Benchmarks for Science Literacy* and *Science for all Americans,* all this effort is going to go for naught. I think there is in this whole debate an intellectual issue of enormous importance that, by and large, has been ignored; namely the shape and structure of knowledge today. It is not something 'up there' that has nothing to do with public schools. It has everything to do with public schools, and that's not being talked about nearly enough."

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STANDARDS AND PERFORMANCE

Sharon Robinson, Assistant Secretary, Office of Educational Research and Improvement at the US Department of Education, introduced yet another theme in the debate about standards: "As we talk about the standards issue, and about institutional goals, there is a distinct gap: it has to do with results. Does the standard itself give us enough to understand performance? I doubt it. I think we've got to establish the standards in terms of student achievement, but then unpack them, so that we can identify evidence of performance. And then we can begin to understand what it costs to deliver a unit of performance. Until we start to see schools as organizations that are performance-oriented, we're not going to deliver on the promise of reform. We've got to build systems that require schools to behave like any other competent organization—to have the capacity to focus on results, defined in concrete terms, using evidence that is agreed upon as acceptable proxies of performance."

Resnick, perhaps the most ardent defender of standards at the meeting, spoke with feeling about an incident at a national convention of parents: "A Title I mother came up to the podium while I was speaking and took the microphone somewhat roughly. I thought she was going to attack the case I was making for educational standards. But she told the story of her son who had been getting 'A's and 'B's in the school he went to near a housing project in the inner city. When the family fortunes increased and they managed to move out to a better part of town, she learned that the child at age ten couldn't read. 'They have to stop lying to us about this stuff,' the mother said, 'We need performance standards.'" Resnick expressed the hope that eventually "80 percent of the public should be able to agree on 80 percent of the basic performance standards. For example, an eighth grader should read twenty high-quality, age-appropriate books and document that fact. At least five of these should deal with the same issue or be by the same author. Each school should establish its own recommended reading list for such purposes."

Others wished to define performance differently. Responding to Resnick, Joan First said, "I want to talk about it in the context of Beverly Hills High School, where I understand that 50 percent of

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the students are not fluent in English. On the level of logic, I have trouble making sense out of a world in which I am told that a reasonable standard for these students is to read twenty books during the course of the school year. Simultaneously, I live in a world where there is a bill in Congress that would formally establish one language as the only language of the country, but also numerous state proposals that would do away with language education. How are we to make sense of this? How do we have standards, raise our expectations for kids, and fail dismally to provide the support that will make it possible for them to reach these standards, to make them work? I don't think you will find anyone in the academic community who is against high expectations or standards. We just don't know how to make it all work."

Dimond, in his portrayal of a "high performance place," dwelled on what he called three essentials: first, that all students become "active learners with deeper understanding of a fewer number of things"; second, that "smaller groups of teachers be empowered to coach teams of active players and learners to achieve such higher standards"; and third that a "diversity of individual learning styles be supported, especially through the use of interactive technologies." Howard Gardner, looking for observable and measurable results, insisted that "understanding is something that you do publicly. It's a performance; others see it. It's exhibited. As far as I'm concerned, if you can't use whatever you've acquired in school to illuminate something new, something you read about in the paper, something that happens in the street, something you notice in the sky, then you don't really understand."

SOCIAL CONTEXT

The preoccupation with standards reflected divisions and misgivings that could not be easily negotiated. It seemed easier to agree with Graham when she insisted that families and communities have a much greater influence on children than schools, but that the public wishes to believe that it is the schools that need to be relied on to form children. She believed that "society and children would be better served if public policy directed to the young would focus more on family and community support, television restriction, as well as health and child care provision." But the focus, as

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she knew only too well, has remained on the school. "In a sense, such an emphasis is understandable," she said, "since defining the issue that way makes the problem containable and assignable to a certain segment of society, namely the educator. The broader focus, on the other hand, would necessitate changes from everybody, from all of us. It would not just be school reform but social reform, which is even more difficult but much more necessary."

Katherine Merseth, Executive Director of the Harvard Project on Schooling and Children, considering what teachers were being asked to do, thought it an overwhelming task: "we ask them to keep track of assessment, think about new content standards, concern themselves with school organization, and worry about access and equity." In her view, there was no way for teachers to do all these things alone. For her, as for others, the only way was for teachers to "connect with other adults—principals, social workers, health-care providers, and parents—whose influence on children's learning was profound." The problem, however, was that these groups were not very effective in communicating with one another; each tended to treat only a single aspect of the child's life. In Howe's words, which Merseth quoted approvingly, "everyone treats part of the kid but no one is looking at the whole kid."

Houston, insisting that American society failed to support its children in the way it ought to do, imagined that it might resolve its problem by asking the schools "to step in and take up the slack." Because this was not working, had never worked, and never would work, Houston saw the need to "find some other way to re-engage society with schools." The problem was to find that way. Patrick O'Rourke, reflecting on his twenty-five years as a classroom teacher, knew that "the culture of a school is a reflection of the culture of the society," that the societal context in which schools function must always be taken into account when educational successes and failures are considered, when comparisons are made with conditions that exist abroad. Houston, making such a comparison with Japan, noted that "Japan averages about forty kids per classroom, and that number is about the same, in my experience, in California. Our forty, however, are very different kinds of children; a third speak something other than the primary language. The teacher, compelled to deal with gangs and family

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deterioration, works in a context very different from any that exists in Japan."

David Gardner, suggesting that we live in a time of "acute modernity," which he defined as urbanization, specialization of knowledge, labor industrialization, mass migration, and technological evolution, argued that many of the problems afflicting America's schools derive from these trends, profoundly and predominantly centrifugal in their effects. Given today's shrunken sense of community, Gardner said, it becomes harder than ever to generalize, and there is, inevitably, a greater reliance on anecdote. In these conditions, research findings tend to be suspect.

While accepting that all these factors are indeed crucially important and may help to explain the present malaise, Latanision believed that the economic setting in which schools operate is probably the single most important factor in explaining their dilemmas. On a visit to an inner-city school in Boston, he "found an absolute sense of despair on the part of youngsters who are convinced they will never have the means to survive in an environment that is desperate, economically, but also in other ways." At the other end of the spectrum, he found that "children in schools of means" had the opposite attitude, which nevertheless had the same effect: "In their minds, there is no need to work hard at education because they already have most of what they want. The net result is that we have youngsters at both ends of the economic spectrum who are underachieving. What is missing in both is a sense of motivation. That may be the root cause of our school problems."

Dimond, listening to this, responded by noting that students did not arrive at this sense of hopelessness without reason. As he explained, "If you look at the period from 1947 to 1973, all five quintiles in the population had their living standards double. From 1973 to 1992 they stagnated; only the top 20 percent gained, its income rising by about 25 percent. The bottom 60 percent actually fell; there was no longer a rising tide lifting all the boats. This is the real challenge of our time. I don't believe that it can be solved by the old equity notions that worked for the earlier generation."

Houston, echoing these sentiments, though in a different way, dwelled on what he called the "lopsided priorities" of the nation, reflected in the way it spends its money. The economic crunch, he

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explained, had only exacerbated the nation's social problems. Using violence as his example, Houston said, "It turns out that school is the safest place for kids in our society, regardless of what we think about violence in schools. Statistics suggest that in many areas, if you wish to be safe, you're better off in school than out on the street."

TEACHING AS A CAREER

Howard Hiatt, Director of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences' project "Initiatives for Children" and Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School, in a severe indictment, said, "Whether the topic is education, health, or the life of children out of school, the situation is abominable in all aspects. It is in our enlightened self-interest to attend to the condition of America's children—particularly poor children, although well-to-do children are also in trouble. There's no such thing as other people's children! If children could be added to the agenda of every institution in the country, as they have been here at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, there would be a hope of really addressing the problem in the proportions it merits; but until we do more to improve the quality of life of teachers, nothing else we do will suffice."

Bruce Alberts, President of the National Academy of Sciences, concurring in this, argued that not only must more serious efforts be made to persuade talented men and women to choose school teaching as a profession, but they must be supported in their choice, with colleges and universities reconsidering what they can do to change the common perception of school teaching as a career. Latanision noted that significant steps are in fact already being taken by some in higher education to achieve that purpose. In his words, "I have always found it ironic that we entrust the education of our youngsters to people we feel are underachievers. It is becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy. One of the things we've done at MIT, at the request of students, is establish a program that allows our undergraduates to become qualified to teach in the public school system. There is a very important social message contained in this curricular decision." Rosovsky, while applauding such initiatives, insisted that universities are not in a position to

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control the economic forces that determine the professions students choose. In his words, "I'm very cynical about what's been said about how to get more first-class people into schools. We can't rely on a few idealists to reform a national educational system. How we compensate teachers, how we treat them, all that is going to have an effect. The market works."

If market forces tend systematically to misallocate resources, taking them away from education, as Elmore suggested, it is no surprise that such arguments gained attention. "We chronically under-invest in teachers' knowledge—in three dimensions," he said. "We do it in the way we create the conditions of work. No professional could hope to learn across several domains and at ever-increasing levels of sophistication within the organizational constraints under which teachers now work. Second, the design of the organizations in which education is done is fundamentally flawed, particularly in its capacity to allow teachers to share work, to understand and observe each other. Finally, we reward people for acquiring academic credits that have no relationship to our expectations of what they will be required to do or the knowledge we value."

These sentiments were enthusiastically supported by Schwartz, who noted that "the major source of dollars in the system for continuing education is money that mindlessly goes into rewarding teachers for the accumulation of credits unconnected with what teachers and students really need at school." Remarking on the blurring of the lines between preparing for a teaching career, the work that goes on in continuing education, and what is achieved through professional development, he called for more rational policies to effect the preparation, induction, and support of teachers. Darling-Hammond was even more concrete: "In every school that I've seen that has bitten the bullet and restructured, they have said: 'guidance counselors, come back into classrooms; resource room teachers, come back into classrooms; department heads, start to teach; principals teach.' Everyone is working with kids, and that is how they have gotten class size down. They are building longer-lasting relationships, and now insist on blocks of time longer than forty-five minutes. They can scaffold teaching for understanding and build relationships needed to bring students to high standards. When they've done that uniformly, teaching and

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learning become more effective. It is all related. Simplifying schooling is related to simplifying and enhancing the curriculum. We keep saying that we cannot afford to buy time for teachers; it is because we're committed to spending most of our money on things other than teachers."

In much the same vein, Nathan spoke of what teachers need: "I think it would be really simple for all teachers to have access to an office, a phone, a computer, and a desk. When a dean of a Graduate School of Education came to our school, he asked, 'What is this room?' It was a room filled with desks, telephones, and tons of books. Our response: 'This is the teacher office.' His reply: 'It's the most inspiring school space I've been in.' This is what we all ought to be striving for." Tran, from her perspective as a kindergarten teacher, agreed: "Along with many of the teachers I know, I feel that teachers need recognition and confidence from the public even more than money or incentives." Daniel Goroff added, "All this talk about the 'Information Age' reinforces for me what most teachers have always understood: that there is a great difference between information and knowledge. At our best, American educators deserve respect as true knowledge workers, practitioners and facilitators of lifelong learning, skilled developers of human potential. This is some of what we are able to bring to the table in our dealings with other sectors of the economy."

Graham, responding to all this, told a truth that academics are loathe to accept: "The places in which teachers have the least respect are colleges and universities. Those of us who work in such places need to examine our consciences and the culture of our institutions that have created this lack of appreciation for the people who are preparing our students." Alberts made a comparable plea: "The bottom line is that we have to make teaching an attractive career for our young people who are idealistic and able, who would want to do this kind of thing, if it were rewarded. And if we don't do that, we're not going to really be successful in education. If they could have their energies and ideas used effectively, we'd have enormously more young people wanting to take up teaching careers. We have almost no scientifically-trained people going into the schools, something we badly need."

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Those sentiments were warmly agreed to by Gerald Holton, Professor of Physics and History of Science at Harvard University, who said, "The time has arrived to bring the academic and the school teaching professions closer together. This meeting is an example of it. I think academe is ready for more than simply getting out of the way while teachers do what they want to do. You can ask for more from academics, and you can expect more. In terms of teacher training, for example, you have the examples given by Ronald Latanision of a program that prepares MIT graduates to become teachers. The same is happening at Harvard College, involving collaboration between the School of Education and the departments of physics and mathematics and some others. Producing competent teachers in this way is new. There are unusual opportunities for collaboration of this sort." "In my office in the federal government," Joyce Justus replied, "a discussion is going on about how to produce the finest scientists and engineers for the twenty-first century. We chose the word 'finest' because there was a feeling that it conveyed something other than just the smartest. We are looking for people who have a sense of the worth of individuals in the society at large. I think the role of government is to do two things: support the activities of all teachers in all classrooms and engage us as a nation in a dialogue about what children are really worth."

If the last comments created a certain mood of well-being, perhaps even of optimism, that was quickly shattered by Sizer, who said, "Listening to comments such as, 'Wouldn't it be nice to have a desk, to have a telephone, we need help, we'll go out and beg for it,' I was thinking about the temper of our discussion and others like it in the last few years. The temper was very different in earlier periods. When you visit some of the schools today and look at the kids, look at the conditions, you leave blazing angry. What is interesting about our discussions, and this is a typical one, is the absence of the anger that ought to attach to the shame we Americans feel when we allow, indeed tolerate, such conditions and discuss them in the way we do. What is it about our time that keeps us so cool?" Howe agreed; in his words, "The issue is one of great urgency. If this were a medical emergency, it would get attention; if it were a national emergency, in terms of missiles and ships headed towards Cuba, it would get attention; but education

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just does not have that kind of image. The response time is correspondingly slow or there is no response at all."

EFFICIENCY AND COSTS

For Elmore, as for others, the issue of efficiency and costs seemed very important: "In school education, we don't know what anything costs. Nobody in this system can tell you what anything costs. We know what we spend (there has been a 30 percent increase in real expenditures per pupil since the 1950s, for example) but we don't know what it costs to deliver a unit of performance. One of the reasons we have distributional anomalies is that our policies are out of line with what we think good practices are. Efficiency has to be on the table, and we have to figure out a way to define it so that we don't lose educators in the process. We have to define it in terms of what dollars buy. If we do what we've done in the past, and talk about what dollars buy in terms of teachers, materials, and Xerox machines, we're dead. We have to talk about what dollars buy in terms of what students can do."

Howe added an important detail when he said, "Most of the comparative study done about school finance looks at the full cost of schools, not at the money going into the classroom itself. It ought to. The numbers are available. The people who study this love to use the average cost for the whole school district: personnel, police guards, and everybody else. But if you look at classroom costs, you get a much more useful result." "In this country," Darling-Hammond reported, "50 percent of school personnel are classroom teachers. In other countries, 80 percent of personnel are classroom teachers. Since the 1950s, we've added administrative staff at twice the rate of teachers. So, when you talk about productivity, you have to recognize how very different are the ways of organizing schools."

"New York City," Shanker told the group, "spends $8,000 per child. With the exception of special education, there are no classes with under thirty students; that means that close to a quarter of a million dollars is spent in each classroom. The teacher, with salary, pension, and other benefits, may get up to $70,000 out of that quarter of a million. Then there are the paraprofessionals—one for six classrooms. Schools don't buy many new textbooks. There

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aren't many computers. Where does the money go? We don't know. There should be a reporting system that would make clear to the public what goes into the classroom directly for teaching, and what goes elsewhere." Shanker spoke also of the enormous variation between districts of comparable size, a point that Schwartz made even more explicit when he commented not only on the differences in funding, but also on the great variations between school systems, responding to very different kinds of regulatory patterns: "Even the most reform-minded people at the local level have not the faintest idea of which rules, regulations, and requirements come from which part of the system. Between the provisions in local collective bargaining agreements, the perceptions about what states require, and the strings attached to a great deal of the equity-derived federal legislation, there is an enormous sense of being imprisoned by all sorts of constraints and limitations."

While others talked about the flow of money into the system as a whole, Tran brought the discussion back to what individual teachers experience in that system. She said, "I'm shaken when I hear about logging on and communicating with other people, because I don't have a computer. I don't even have a telephone to call a parent and say: 'Do you know what your kindergartner did today? Do you know how amazingly he did?' Or, to say, 'your child has a temperature of 102 degrees. Come and pick her up quickly.' I just want a telephone. That, as I see it, is technology and equity."

TIME ON TASK

If the discussion had led to comment on costs, it was no less concerned with time, with how it is used in schools. As Csikszentmihalyi explained, "Time is not money, but it is life, and so the question of how we use time is crucial. It has been reconfirmed over and over again that those children who spend too much time watching television are not going to learn as well as those who watch less. How much of their free time they spend in active pursuits will have an impact on how much they learn. So, we cannot separate the way in which time is being used from what children learn." Graubard agreed, telling about his experience observing schools in Providence, Rhode Island. "I was struck," he

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said, "by the extraordinary amount of time schoolteachers spent keeping order in the classroom. It was not a matter of preventing students from throwing spitballs—such behavior might have happened at any time—but of keeping some modicum of order in the classroom. Making certain that everyone had the paper and the books required took time. 'Teach, I don't have a pencil,' cried one boy. Out came the pencil, delivered with only a very slight hint of impatience. Other equally urgent requests were also attended to. Forty-five minutes, interrupted by more than occasional messages from the public address system, passed very quickly. The teaching was minimal."

Shanker dwelled on the same subject, giving it greater precision: "The classroom has become a custodial institution. The school is not a university; the students are not paying tuition. Forced to go, many of them do not like it. The school administration will almost never give a teacher good marks because her students did well academically. But if the principal walks by and the kids are running around, jumping and making a lot of noise, the teacher is told about it. You cannot control your class—that is the message. So, the first job you have is to control the class. If you fail in that, you'll never have a chance to do anything else. Beginning teachers often find that controlling the class means not doing anything very interesting or exciting, because the class tends to be more disorderly when you try to engage them in something that is interesting. A lot of the boredom that teachers fall back on is actually thought of as a means of controlling the class."

A very different kind of analysis was offered by John Jennings. In his view, it was time to rethink the school day, and indeed the school year. If schools became nine-to-five institutions, open all year, many problems would be resolved. He spoke with approval of the report prepared by the Commission on Time and Learning, which indicated that American students spent less than half as much time on basic subjects as many of their foreign contemporaries. In that situation, was it at all surprising that many were not doing well? To learn to play the piano, drive a car, do anything that called for skill, required time. Sizer agreed, saying, "it takes time to do things, and you do not understand them until you do them. To learn to write well, you have to write and write again."

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Still, what worried Howard Gardner was the time wasted in repeating subjects already studied: "I think it's staggering that kids take American history four, five, six times and still do not know it. We ought to ask what is happening." For Shanker, a large part of the problem came from children spending as much as 60 percent of their school time repeating things they had already done. This was one of the many reasons why he supported the standards movement. Having standards implied having greater constraint and uniformity; this did not mean that teachers would become robots, told what to do by those above them. Citing Harold Stevenson, he said, "Asian teachers plan curriculum lessons in common, teach the lessons, then 'polish' them so that they will be better the next year. A lot of American education reformers and many of our teachers would say that's too rigid and not creative. They see teaching as painting on a blank canvas. But Stevenson points out that Asian teachers also view themselves as creative artists—performers of a violin concerto. They don't compose the concerto, they concentrate on interpreting and playing it well."

MOTIVATION

While others in the room emphasized the importance of teachers staying with their pupils over many class levels—not only because this would allow them to know their students better, but also because it would help make the curriculum more coherent—Shanker insisted on seeing the political nature of the school system. Almost no attention had been given to what Shanker saw as another of the unique features of the educational system as it had developed in the United States. He said, "Ours is the only country that basically has a local political system around schools. It is a job system within the community. It supports school board members for their reelection. And within the school, there's a patronage system also. If the principal wants support from his faculty, and many teachers want time away from the classroom, that time away can be granted by the principal, providing it to those who support him, denying it to others. At any one time you may have two, three, or four full-time teachers out of the classroom in a particular school, performing administrative functions."

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Those conditions would not be changed very easily. Nor did Shanker believe that the introduction of standards alone would cause students to work hard. As he pointed out, systems around the world depended on developing methods to motivate the young, using both intrinsic and extrinsic goals. For him, the United States was the only country in the world that made so little use of extrinsic motivation. Might this help to explain why, he asked, "ours doesn't work as well as the others"? What, then, was his recommendation? "If parents, teachers, communities, and, especially, students see a relationship between getting into college or not on the basis of reaching certain performance standards, they may work harder to reach them. And the same with getting good jobs. I would predict that standards are not going to amount to very much unless they are connected to something that has to do with motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, not one or the other."

Howard Gardner, listening to all this, wondered what "the relationship was between what we know about the human mind—learning, thinking, happiness, intention, and motivation—and what actually happens in the classroom." He said, "Everybody pays lip service to the notion that there's some connection between what Lauren Resnick or Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi has discovered and what ought to go on in classrooms, but often it isn't well translated and turns out to be misapplied. In that case, perhaps we'd be better off without it." Was this a counsel of despair, or did it simply acknowledge that the theme of motivation was substantially more complex than was generally acknowledged? Latanision, in effect, admitted this, saying, "I don't know how you teach teachers to motivate kids, but if we're talking about social goals, I think this issue of motivation has to be on the agenda. There's got to be a way of motivating people to inspire kids to achieve their potential." How is this to be done?

Sizer recognized a vicious circle. "At many schools," he said, "there is no conversation, and if you arranged one, teachers wouldn't know what to say. So, maybe we had better just tell them what to do. Or, you do it the other way and say, 'We'll take that risk, so that maybe, just maybe, some of the teachers we most esteem will not drop out, will decide to stay in teaching.' Otherwise, the first to drop out are often the best qualified in terms of certification and academic achievement." Schwarz agreed: "I think that some

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of the impetus for great change will come when groups of people define themselves as powerful, as being in control and responsible for and accountable to the students and families in their schools. As principal and co-director of the school, I am an active member of this community, but no more than any other staff member in the school. Hiring teachers, supporting teachers, counseling teachers, rating teachers, letting teachers know if they need to go and leave teaching, this is power. And it is a responsibility, an accountability for and to a community. Conversations about standards and the like by competent teachers can be a model for the kids in the school, showing what it is to take control of your life. I want the students in my school, when they graduate, to be in control of their lives. I want them to be taught by people who are in control of their lives."

STANDARDS FOR TEACHERS

A comparable view, taken by Darling-Hammond, but expressed somewhat differently, suggested that "teachers can't be effective if they're not in a structure that enables them to work effectively. Access to knowledge and teacher preparation in this country should be comparable to what professional teachers elsewhere experience. Professional standards for teachers and teaching will allow us to reclaim decision-making for teachers. People think teachers can't be trusted and thus you have extensive external controls on teaching. But external controls produce constraints that create problems. The way out is to empower teachers with sufficient knowledge and ongoing learning opportunities in the school, so that they can be trusted to make decisions."

Hearing this, James Kelly spoke about the National Board of Certification system and what its statement "What Teachers Should Know and Be Able To Do" recommended. Kelly explained that five broad categories of knowledge, skill, and competence were described that all teachers were expected to have: first, knowledge of students and the diversity of students, knowing how to help a diverse group to learn; second, knowledge of subject matter; third, skill in managing and monitoring student learning, explicitly differentiating this from the act of teaching; fourth, skill in analyzing, criticizing, and improving one's own practice; and, finally, work-

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ing with other professionals and parents. According to Kelly, specific standards are being developed in some thirty fields of teaching specialization, very different from the 1,500 or more now considered by those who offer state teachers' licenses. The intent is to develop also a set of performance assessments that will help determine the efficacy of what is being accomplished.

INNOVATION

Kelly introduced another theme that had figured only very incidentally until that point, the matter of technology. "If there is anything that can help transform institutions in this century in this country," he said, "it is technology." Believing that technology had not made "much of a dent in the public schools up to now," and that the technology in use was "essentially one hundred years old," he spoke of the ways in which it had "radically empowered individuals across many institutional sectors of American society, both economically and intellectually." He warned that "the entire apparatus, goals, schools, and institutions, are at risk if we can't come to terms with how to utilize technology to advance student learning." This view was heartily supported by Dimond, who believes that "we're on the verge of a tremendous revolution in technology, productivity, and learning that will empower teachers, students, and parents to be no longer captives of seat time in the classroom. They'll be free to learn when and where they want."

Without explicitly disagreeing with this account of what technology would soon be doing to change American education, Sizer introduced a note of caution: "It's exceedingly inconvenient that all learning is individual. And the economic question is, given limited resources, how much can you accept that reality? How much do you have to assume that you are going to lose some kids? Because you can't treat them one by one." Rosovsky, listening to these comments, was moved to say: "Everyone says we have to focus on the individual, and there is almost the implication that education in the future can be tailor-made for the individual's capacities. This is a wonderful ideal, but it is hardly practical. As an economist, I ask myself whether, from the point of view of public policy, 'tailor-making' makes any sense at all. We may be placing too much hope in technology. Must we not concern our-

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selves with what is practical and 'doable' in a society where resources are extremely limited and may be even more limited in the future?"

Sizer, in words that expressed a certain bewilderment about what could be done to meet the kinds of criticisms expressed in the meeting, said, "We've talked a lot about the rigidity of the system, and periodically we think we should just blow up the whole system and start over. And we choke that back, because we know that will just accelerate segregation. We don't want segregation, class-based or race-based, or anything else-based. And so we're caught in the middle. What could replace the current system that would be fair and democratic? We don't have an option, we don't have alternatives now between the hierarchy and the unfettered free enterprise system. I think the invention of that in-between solution is very important."

SCALE

Schwarz, without suggesting that he had the solution, expressed his belief in small schools, arguing that only in such schools would teachers be empowered to do their best work. Hiatt spoke about the Tennessee Experiment, where children from kindergarten through third grade were randomly assigned to classes of fifteen or twenty-five, and then followed for several years; the study found that those in the smaller classes did better, not only while they were in those classes but in later years as well. Darling-Hammond told of other class size research that demonstrated that smaller class size consistently helped younger children as well as the economically disadvantaged. Alberts was not wholly persuaded, recognizing that a price is paid for smallness. As he explained, "Smallness may mean kids can't study a variety of foreign languages. I'd be a little concerned about that. Smallness may mean that nobody has an opportunity to study physics or calculus. It may just not be available, and you have to allow for that. I'd be happy to buy into the small schools idea, but for science, at least, there are problems. You cannot expect a small school to look at the morass of science materials put out by commercial publishers and decide what they would be well-advised to use in their own in-service programs. We

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need to refine this model of small schools, if it is to be made viable."

It was significant that a number who spoke on the subject of "small schools" emphasized the need for more research. Kaplan, for example, speaking of the effort to break down larger high schools into smaller units, called it "a very messy business." She spoke of the confusion among principals, unit directors, and others. "In schools like Central Park East or Fenway," she said, "where the school itself is the smaller unit, that is one thing, but when we look at the factory school, breaking it down into smaller units may be difficult. It definitely bears research." O'Rourke described the situation he knew best: "In Hammond, we have just built three elementary schools. They're state of the art in terms of technology, pedagogy, and learning. They are big buildings, intended to accommodate seven hundred to eight hundred pupils. They are, however, divided into pods—not schools within schools, but pods that are literally different schools around a center. The community could not afford to build a large complex of small buildings, and this was the solution we came up with. We were able to build these new buildings with the consent of the community, black and white. This is the direction to go. We are using the ideas of Howard Gardner and Ted Sizer in our educational planning; we have big buildings but they are not factory model schools."

Listening to this, Csikszentmihalyi said, "I have learned one thing from this discussion, something akin to the slogan of the environmental movement. 'Think globally, act locally.' By 'think globally,' I refer to the need to concentrate on what we expect education to be, not only in the schools but in a wider context, dealing with the flow of information to young people, the next generation. As for 'act locally,' I agree with what has been said about small schools, in charge of their own destiny, in touch with their community."

Without explicitly disagreeing with any of this, Resnick raised a disturbing possibility: "Some people aren't sure that the change in the workplace is real, whether it may not all be a hoax. Will there in fact be enough good jobs, or are we holding out false hopes, especially for minorities? Are the models of the changed workplace really relevant to the school as workplace? Some of us think so; others are not so sure." The issue of work, of the relation

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between schooling and employment, took on new life when Dimond asserted that "there is hardly any connection between skills learned in school and those needed in the workplace. There is an absolute vacuum in this country. Compare it with a European model of apprenticeships. Let's have some venture capital; let's try and connect firms and workplaces in contextual learning; let's try and build bridges in establishing networks between employers and schools so that students can in fact understand what is out there in the real world, so that learning has some relevance." Nathan, speaking of the conditions at the Fenway School, where collaboration with community agencies, hospitals, and corporations are common, told of faculty meetings and retreats where non-school personnel were welcome. The interaction, she said, was making everyone learn more.

TEXTBOOKS AND TESTS

While no one deplored such collaboration, a generally shared concern of a very different kind was expressed by two of the scientists in the room. Alberts said that in effect science standards have long existed in the country, but they were "set by textbook publishers and exam makers, and they imposed a tyranny on teachers. We've been working at the National Academy of Sciences for three years to try to break that tyranny by going for a completely different kind of curriculum. A major part of what we have to do is create a market for good curricula in science and convince some people to produce those curricula, to produce quality stuff. I believe they will, if there is a market for it. This would be the way to help teachers out of the bind in which they find themselves presently. I know hundreds of outstanding science teachers, and they are in a real box, compelled to prepare kids for biology tests that deal with what is in those high school biology textbooks. The fact is you can't know it all, given the amount that is covered. You learn only a list of facts, content-free. We really have to change the system in some dramatic way. For example, the SAT II: Biology Subject Test, what was formerly the achievement test in biology, is an extreme example of a test that forces the wrong kind of teaching. When we started at the Academy, we went to somebody who was the head of the SAT II at the Educa-

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tional Testing Service to explain the situation. None of those people seemed to believe or know that their test was destructive of the curriculum. There is a real dissonance, and it is difficult to overcome it."

Holton told a comparable story for physics, where the textbooks, in his words, "impinge on the quality of learning and the conditions of teaching." Holton, speaking of his own experience, said, "I was involved in a national physics school program. We trained a lot of teachers, and 120 teachers around the country helped to refine the new textbook in use through five drafts. The first thing one of the prospective publishers said about our manuscript was, 'You have to rewrite it. It's a twelfth-grade course, but it has to be on an eighth-grade reading level.' They also gave us a list of words to omit, starting with 'absolute.' I don't know why teachers stand for this sort of thing. If you want to improve learning and the professional position of teachers, something has to be done about the textbook monopoly."

Katherine Layton, a mathematics teacher at the Beverly Hills High School in California, spoke up: "The main thing I want my kids to leave school with is to be learners. I am at an academic school; we have a set curriculum that we are expected to get through. It is a race. We have very little latitude. The idea of being able to reduce the content is something that all our staff is anxious to do, but we don't feel we can do it. It will penalize our kids down the line when they take some of the standardized tests for college entrance." Sizer listened, but insisted, "What you have to do is simplify. If you say that reading and writing and computational mathematics are important for every kid, then you've got to figure out what it takes to get there. And, you quickly learn in most secondary schools that you cannot do too much; you have to drop things. What is absent in much of the discussion is any toughness about what reductions can be made. We can't have it all. Serious reform involves losers. The standards movement, the way some of us have talked about it, never mentions losers. So, we now have eighty-five standards in the arts, and the arts people say, in effect, give us more time for the arts. We have lists of standards in science that demand a great deal of time. Everybody wants more time. No one is prepared to look at the whole program, examine its intellectual coherence, and say what has to be cut. There is a wide gap

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between policy talk and school practice, all of it very well-intentioned, but it has to be narrowed. Very tough questions have to be asked about what is more and what is less important."

CONCLUSIONS

Kelly, speaking almost at the end of the Convocation, tried to devise a set of principles that could guide educators in their efforts to prepare the youth of the country for life in a healthy society. For him, a twenty-first century school had to show eight characteristics: *1)* It had to be a community of student and teacher learners. *2)* It would not start with the school as a building or the school as an organization; such thought disabled all thinking about school reform. *3)* It would assume no common rate of learning for all the adult student learners; it would take for granted very great diversity. *4)* It would require everyone to teach, students and teachers. *5)* However teachers were defined, the best paid would be paid as much as the best paid in any profession. *6)* The only incentives allowed would be those linked to learning and quality. *7)* Technology would be permitted. And *8)* differentiation among students and learners would be permitted.

The two co-chairs closed the meeting. Holton, in his final remarks said, "Schooling is a basic component of a healthy democracy, in which education is taken seriously and is not a subject of pious talk. Democracy is fragile. Looking at American schools today, we must ask whether they are preparing children for a healthy democracy. Are they preparing for an alliance between the older generation and the younger, between different ethnic groups and across other fissures? Are they preparing for a future in which a job holder will be ready to learn throughout life? And is the system being strengthened by dedicated political leaders, or weakened by mere sentimentalized attention?"

David Gardner had the last word. "In 1981," he said, "when Secretary of Education T. H. Bell called and indicated that he intended to create a National Commission on Excellence in Education, I asked him why he was doing this, what was his motive? I pressed him hard on this. He answered that the average American believes that the quality of the public school has declined and its capability has eroded, and if that cannot be reversed in a

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reasonable period of time, the middle class will withdraw its support from public education and in its place there will be a system of vouchers, tuition tax credits, and other inducements to afford the average person the opportunity to move from the public to the private sector. Many will. And as they move, support for the public schools will decline. In the end, Bell said, we will have a very divided society, unhealthy, unhelpful, damaging to the cohesion of the United States. It is still the case that we have to find ways of addressing those concerns."

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Patricia Albjerg Graham

Battleships and Schools

WHAT HAVE WE WANTED SCHOOLS to do for our children in this century?[1] The simple answer is "educate them." But the more complicated issue is what that answer has meant at different times in this century. Today we mostly mean "increase the academic achievement of all students." In the 1960s and 1970s, however, many schools throughout the United States concentrated their energies on broadening students' access to schools that were previously closed to them. Between 1920 and 1955, when the progressive education movement gripped the country, good mental health or "adjustment" was the primary objective of schools. In the early years of the century (1900–1920), assimilation of the children of immigrants, both rural and urban, seemed to be preeminent.

Traditionally, Americans have considered their schools as mechanisms for improving society. What society has been either unable or unwilling to undertake with its adults, it has expected the schools to accomplish with its children. As the nation's priorities have shifted during this century, so, too, have the goals of the schools: from assimilation to adjustment, access to achievement.

Citizens viewing the schools at a discrete moment in time often fail to recognize the profound external forces that have buffeted the schools in earlier decades. Thus, they often find it difficult to understand why remnants of previous social agendas for the schools persist in the face of new, contradictory demands.

American schools in the twentieth century resemble the battleships of World War II. Large, powerful, cumbersome, with enor-

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mous crews, these giants of the ocean are directed by some distant authority that presumably understands better than anyone on the ship, including the captain, where and why they should go. Maneuverability is not their strength. When ordered to change course, they do so, but there are significant delays between when the order is issued and when the ship moves in a different direction. The bigger the change in direction, the longer it takes for the ship to start on the new course.

In this century, American schools have been directed to change course several times. In the early years of this century, schools were principally expected to expand to assimilate the rapidly rising population of children, many of them sons and daughters of immigrants. By mid-century, however, schools were not expected simply to accommodate the children, but also to help them to adjust to modern life, increasingly urban, suburban, and industrial. By the beginning of the last third of the century, the schools were challenged to serve all of the nation's children. Now, at the end of the century, schools are again being directed to change course. They are expected to achieve high standards of academic learning with all their students.

The teachers and administrators of American schools, like the crews of battleships, respond to the challenges they are given. But like battleships, schools are large, powerful, and cumbersome, and profound changes in course do not come easily or quickly. Americans who suddenly decided in the 1980s that they wanted their children to lead internationally in mathematics and science achievement were disconcerted to realize that the schools could not immediately accomplish this goal.

The comparison of battleships and schools suggests some similarities, but the circumstances of schools and battleships are not identical. Battleships have not been built since World War II, and their use in military operations has declined precipitously; we have come to believe that other forms of military equipment serve us better than battleships. The navy recognized that the all-purpose battleship needed to be supplemented by specialized equipment, including nuclear powered submarines, guided missile destroyers, redesigned aircraft carriers, and sophisticated amphibious landing craft.

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Schools, however, continue to be built and to form the mainstay of our publicly-determined means of rearing our children. They are our all-purpose institution for children. They have not been augmented by the educational equivalent of guided missile destroyers. Although families and communities are much more powerful influences on children than are schools, the public still expects the schools to raise their children, and to do it according to their direction.

Undoubtedly, society and children would be better served if public policy directed to the young would focus more on family and community supports, television restriction, and health and child-care provision, but the focus has remained on the school. In a sense, such emphasis on the school is understandable since it makes the problem seem containable. A broader focus would require changes from all of us and would be not school reform but social reform, which is even more difficult.

During this century Americans have continued to place extraordinary responsibilities upon the schools to aid children as well as to educate them. The schools' efforts have often been heroic, but their casualties have sometimes been high. They are not equipped or adapted to serve all of the many different needs of American children. Under present arrangements they absolutely cannot meet those needs and educate all children to high levels of academic achievement. Our children require and deserve support from a fleet, not just from a battleship.

Naval strategists know well that some battles require amphibious craft and some require air support. No one naval stratagem works well in all cases. Each assignment necessitates its own plan. While the naval material and personnel are from a common stock, the amount and concentration of different supplies—human and technological—and the ingenuity to deploy them in effective ways vary. The choices are driven by the problem at hand, the supplies that are available, and the additional support that can be provided for the duration of the engagement.

So it is with the education of our children. The educational problems children face differ widely: some are cognitive; some are moral; some are health related; some are based in family or community structures; some are rooted in a culture that is profoundly anti-intellectual and consumerist; some are tied to definitions of

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adolescence that stress sex, violence, drugs, and alcohol. All of these interfere, in a dizzying variety of combinations, with the education we seek for our children. The solution, therefore, must be adaptable to the particular situation.

In some neighborhoods the greatest challenge may be to provide more family and community support for moral development and cooperative activities, and to discourage consumerist tendencies, sexual activity, and alcohol use. Within each neighborhood children require different kinds of attention. Government action is unlikely to stimulate those changes. Action must come from families and communities. In addition to school personnel, leadership will most likely come from civic associations, religious groups, and fraternal organizations. In short, the school battleship is abetted by a guided missile destroyer of community leaders.

In other neighborhoods the educational obstacles may be more extensive. Significant improvements in health and nutrition and in the stability and safety of the home may be required in addition to the family and community issues cited above. Local support alone is not likely to alleviate these problems. It is a necessary but not sufficient component of the solution, which must also include federal and state programs assuring health care, providing opportunities for employment and child care, and income subsidies when employment is not possible.

This country cannot afford, either economically or morally, to allow its children to suffer because of the difficulties of their parents. Thus, the schools need to be augmented not only by the educational equivalent of the guided missile destroyer but also by the entire fleet of aircraft carriers and amphibious craft. In education that means provision of the non-cognitive supports (health care and emotional and economic stability) that permit children to explore the world and to learn. Our future as a nation depends upon it.

ENDNOTE

[1]This essay is drawn from Patricia Albjerg Graham, "Assimilation, Adjustment, and Access: An Antiquarian View of American Education," in Diane Ravitch and Maris A. Vinovskis, eds., *Learning from the Past: What History Teaches Us About School Reform* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995). Reprinted by permission of The Johns Hopkins University Press.

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Albert Shanker

Education Reform: What's Not Being Said

THE SCHOOL REFORM DEBATE HAS BROUGHT a number of important issues before policymakers, the education profession, and the public. Among these are the need for content and performance standards and assessments that inform us about the extent to which these standards have been met. There is also widespread agreement on the desirability of small schools. But there are a number of major issues that either have been ignored or, when not ignored, given a "politically correct" response. I would like to add these to the education debate.

AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM

The United States is attempting to implement major educational changes. There is substantial agreement that other industrialized democracies are doing a better job of educating their students than we are. This holds true not only for their highest achievers but for their middle and lowest tracks as well. Many of these countries differ as much from each other as they do from us. Also, with few exceptions, they are now quite diverse in their student populations. Why do we not see what these many different education systems have in common? Why do we not try to learn from their successes? Why do we not translate their textbooks, their examinations, and samples of their students' work? Why, instead, do we constantly try "new," "creative," and "promising"—but totally unproven—programs?

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DISCIPLINE

In poll after poll, parents, teachers, and the public rate violent and disruptive behavior as their number one concern with our schools. Yet students who bring weapons to school often are allowed to remain in that school or are simply transferred to another school. Few are suspended for any substantial period or expelled or placed in separate education facilities. And when disabled students behave in these ways, it is almost impossible to remove them from their classrooms without a court order if it is claimed that their violent or disruptive behavior stems from their disability.

Principals are reluctant to take action for fear of giving the school (and themselves) a poor reputation. Teachers reporting violent or disruptive behavior are likely to be squelched or made to feel that it is their fault. When principals do act, they frequently face court procedures, which are costly in terms of time and money. And courts routinely return the offending student to the school, arguing that it is the best alternative for him. But what about all the other students? Does it make sense to destroy the education of twenty-five or more students because we are trying to "rehabilitate" one? What success has there been in rehabilitating disruptive students in regular schools in the past? To what extent do we encourage more students to be violent and disruptive because of our failure to take action?

No doubt, this is an issue that needs careful handling. Does the disruptive student misbehave with all teachers or with only one? Has he been this way over time or is there some extenuating circumstance involved? Does the disruptive behavior disappear in a more "progressive" classroom environment?

Schools must pay heed to these issues, but there must be separate education facilities for chronically disruptive students. Will this help the disruptive students? We are not sure. We should try to help them return to the regular school, but we cannot allow the education of the majority of students in a class to be destroyed by one. And if our schools continue to do so, there will be mounting pressure from parents for vouchers and for other alternatives to public schools, and that pressure will ultimately succeed. Does it make sense to sacrifice public education by refusing to take action on the 2 or 3 percent of students who are violent or chronically

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disruptive and who may ultimately force 97 or 98 percent of our children out of public schools?

INTRINSIC VERSUS EXTRINSIC MOTIVATION: HIGH STAKES VERSUS NO STAKES

A major difference between our school system and those of other industrialized countries is that they use extrinsic motivation and high stakes for students. This runs counter to much of American educational theory, which holds that *only* intrinsic motivation works. Teachers are told that if students do schoolwork because of some extrinsic reward or threat of punishment, they will cease doing the work and will lose interest in the subject as soon as the promise of reward or threat of punishment is removed, or when the reward or punishment is no longer desired or feared. This is, no doubt, true if the work involves cleaning dishes or disposing of garbage. But suppose that as a result of the extrinsic motivators the student becomes accomplished in reading or writing or becomes acquainted with Shakespeare or classical music. Is it really impossible for someone to become intrinsically interested in something because he was initially compelled to try it?

There is no question that intrinsic motivation is desirable, but can we rely on that alone, at all times, with all students, and in all subjects? Our students tell us we cannot by constantly asking their teachers if a work assignment or test "counts." Other countries have high-stakes exams at a number of junctures in the students' schooling. These exams usually determine which track a student is placed in and also, at a later point, whether the student is permitted to enter the university, technical training, or an apprenticeship. Is it unreasonable to believe that children in other countries learn much more than ours because they work much harder *and* that they work much harder because they must do so in order to attain what they want? Our students who want to enter selective higher education institutions work hard. And those aiming for non-selective institutions know that they need not work hard. Can we ever get our students to do the hard work it takes to learn difficult materials, to write well, or to think things through without high stakes?

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TRACKING: HOMOGENEOUS VERSUS HETEROGENEOUS GROUPING

Official United States educational ideology is against tracking. The argument and the "research" tell us that when classes are grouped homogeneously, the top group does well but the middle and, especially, the lower groups do poorly. We are further told that where there is heterogeneous grouping, the lower groups do much better and the top group does not suffer. This is a real win-win situation! But despite a huge selling job, parents and teachers remain totally unconvinced. Perhaps they are right.

Today, especially, a heterogeneous class has such a wide range of student achievement represented within it that it resembles a one-room schoolhouse. There could easily be students from the second through tenth-grade reading or math levels present. How do we teach them? If we give them all the same lesson, surely at least two-thirds would not benefit. Should we divide the class into three groups and teach each separately? The teacher then must prepare three lessons instead of one, and each of the groups gets only one-third of the teacher's time and attention. Should we individualize instruction? This is nice rhetoric, but it is virtually impossible in classes of twenty-five to thirty or more—or even fewer—students. Occasional reports of some spectacular teacher managing heterogeneous classes well are usually unsubstantiated and offer little hope to the mere mortals who are asked to emulate her.

What about the lower achieving students? Do they lose out by being tracked? They do in the United States, but they do not in other countries. Why? *Because it is not tracking that causes the problem; it is what is on the track when the student gets there.* American students on lower tracks are rarely challenged, so they learn little. In other countries, the message given to lower-track students is something like this: "You may not be in the heavyweight competition, but you will still be competing. You will have to work and practice just as hard as students in the higher tracks; it is just as challenging."

SINGLE STANDARD VERSUS MULTIPLE STANDARDS

A recent and popular slogan in American education is that all children can learn to the same high levels. This is news to parents,

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teachers, and the public; it defies everything we know and appreciate about human differences. But reformers are nonetheless insisting that we establish a single set of "world-class" performance standards and that schools be held accountable for getting all their students to achieve at that level.

The reference to "world-class" is ironic because none of the nations with more successful school systems have a single set of performance standards. They have a common curriculum throughout most or all the elementary grades and a relatively high floor of achievement, but that is not the same as having a single set of performance standards. Moreover, all of those countries put students into different tracks, beginning in the fourth or seventh grade, on the basis of their having met different performance standards. There is a common curriculum within these secondary tracks and, again, a high floor of achievement, but even within tracks there is not a single performance standard. And none of the "world-class" countries believe that whether or not students achieve is strictly attributable to what the adults in the school system do.

If we set a single standard, we essentially have two choices. One is to set the standard high. That is desirable, especially since we are talking about "world-class." Unfortunately, most of our students would not reach it. The very highest standards in other nations, those for university entrance, are reached by a maximum of 30 percent of the students. Of course, because they have multiple standards and paths to success, this is not considered a 70 percent failure rate. But it surely would be here. Even a much smaller failure rate would produce intense pressure to lower the standard, and we would effectively be back where we started.

The other choice is to set the standard low, perhaps slightly higher than the minimum competency standard we now have but at a level that would be attainable by virtually all of our students. We could then congratulate ourselves for raising the floor of achievement, but we will have missed an opportunity to raise the ceiling and to move up the middle as well. If we can do better by all students by acknowledging that they, like all humans, differ in their capacities, motivations, and interests, then why settle for a new minimum competency standard disguised in "world-class" rhetoric?

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COMMON CURRICULUM

Most other countries have worked out what they want their students to know and to be able to do as a result of their education. That understanding is embodied in a common, grade-by-grade, subject-by-subject curriculum—wholly common in the early grades and then, at whatever point a country starts to track, common within the tracks. Everyone from the ministerial to the school level takes that curriculum seriously, and high-stakes national or regional exams ensure that they do. Among the advantages of this approach is clarity about teacher training: prospective teachers are trained to teach the common curriculum and are expected to know the subject matter and topics they teach very well. Another advantage is student continuity: when students move from school to school or to different grades within a school, teachers can be fairly sure where the students left off.

This is not true in the United States. With no common content and no high-stakes exams, the curriculum is not delimited. It can include anything that teachers, principals, advocates, or legislators think would be good for students to know. The "official" curriculum is often encyclopedic, and teachers are encouraged to add items of student interest. The results: discontinuity, confusion, an absence of building blocks of knowledge, and a constant need for teachers to determine if students have the necessary background to proceed with the current work.

Equally important, when all teachers at a grade level or in a subject are teaching a common curriculum, there is a basis for professional discussion and collegiality, which we now lack. Which approaches and which materials work best and with whom? Moreover, teachers can be trained to teach a particular subject, texts can be targeted, and many lessons can be standardized and techniques routinized.

Is this "unprofessional"? Quite the contrary. Every profession relies on proven, standard operating procedures. Imagine a doctor, a pharmacist, or an architect—or even a barber—constantly having to be inventive. Creativity comes into play in difficult, nonroutine situations and in developing a better set of routines. The notion that standardization and routinization are evils and that teachers should be creative and innovative every minute of the day

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is disastrous. It is also a major barrier to transforming teaching into a genuine profession.

Harold Stevenson and James Stigler have described how Asian teachers develop common lesson plans, teach from the same plans, and meet to improve the collective plans for the next year. An American reaction to this kind of collaboration is instructive: American teachers would never do that. They are artists (or should be). They stand before a blank canvas and paint a unique painting. Stevenson's answer: Asian teachers also are artists. They are like the violinist playing a concerto. Their artistry and professionalism consist of playing it well or brilliantly, not of composing the concerto while it is being played.

The recent reform emphasis on freeing up each school to do its own thing has pushed this idea that teachers ought to be, or can be, creative all the time to new heights. This is flattering to teachers, and many would find satisfaction in an open curriculum that allows them to teach what students are now interested in or what they feel like teaching. But it is also a setup for the majority of teachers who do not measure up to the superstar teachers who are held up to them as models. No profession or occupation can count a majority of its members as superstars, and none would try to organize itself around the presumption that this could be true or would try to convince the public that this is attainable.

Ultimately, too, it is a setup for students. Teachers who must rely only on their own experience, knowledge, and creativity are less likely to reach students than teachers who have the benefit of the collective wisdom that comes from years of working together to develop and refine lesson plans from a common curriculum. Do we not want the influence of stellar teachers to extend beyond their own classrooms and careers?

Our hostility to a common curriculum makes no sense, but it will be hard to change. Here again, the key to change is high stakes. If entry into college or technical school or getting a good job is clearly related to students meeting high standards, curriculum committees will be compelled to limit the curriculum to what is important; teachers will have clear guidelines for what to do year by year, and methods that are reliable in bringing about student success can be developed and routinized.

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Discipline, high stakes, tracking, common curriculum—these are not feel-good issues. But it is unconscionable that we are willing to run with virtually anything that is novel or "promising" in education while refusing to confront and debate the elements that successful school systems have in common. Romanticism is frequently a characteristic of reformers. Pragmatism would better serve our students and our public schools.

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Lauren B. Resnick

From Aptitude to Effort: A New Foundation for Our Schools

TWO CHALLENGES FACE AMERICAN EDUCATION TODAY: *1)* raising overall achievement levels and *2)* making opportunities for achievement more equitable. The importance of both derives from the same basic condition—our changing economy. Never before has the pool of developed skill and capability mattered more in our prospects for general economic health. And never before have skill and knowledge mattered as much in the economic prospects for individuals. There is no longer a welcoming place in low-skill, high-wage jobs for individuals who have not cultivated talents appropriate to an information economy. The country, indeed each state and region, must press for an overall higher level of such cultivated talents. Otherwise, we can expect a continuation of the pattern of falling personal incomes and declining public services that has characterized the past twenty years.

The only way to achieve this higher level of skill and ability in the population at large is to make sure that all students, not just a privileged and select few, learn the high-level, embedded, symbolic thinking skills that our society requires. Equity and excellence, classically viewed as competing goals, must now be treated as a single aspiration.

To do this will require a profound transformation of our most basic assumptions about the enabling conditions for learning. What we learn is a function of both our talents—our aptitude for particular kinds of learning—and how hard we try—our effort. But what is the relationship between aptitude and effort? Are they

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independent of one another, and, if so, which is more important? Do they compensate for one another? Does one help to create the other?

FACING UP TO OUR APTITUDE-ORIENTED EDUCATION SYSTEM

Historically, American education has wavered between the first and second of these possibilities (the independent and the compensatory) but has never seriously considered the third possibility: that effort can create ability. Early in this century, we built an education system around the assumption that aptitude is paramount in learning and that it is largely hereditary. The system was oriented toward selection, distinguishing the naturally able from the less able and providing students with programs thought suitable to their talents. In other periods, most notably during the Great Society reforms, we worked on a compensatory principle, arguing that special effort, by an individual or an institution, could make up for low aptitude. The third possibility—that effort actually *creates* ability, that people can *become smart* by working hard at the right kinds of learning tasks—has never been taken seriously in America or indeed in any European society, although it is the guiding assumption of education institutions in societies with a Confucian tradition.

Although the compensatory assumption is more recent in American education history, many of our tools and standard practices are inherited from the earlier period in which aptitude reigned supreme. As a result, our schools largely function as if we believed that native ability is the primary determinant in learning, that the "bell curve" of intelligence is a natural phenomenon that must necessarily be reproduced in all learning, that effort counts for little. Consider the following examples: *1)* IQ tests or their surrogates determine who will have access to the enriched programs for the "gifted and talented." This curriculum is denied to students who are judged less capable. *2)* Our so-called "achievement tests" are normed to compare students with one another rather than with a standard of excellence, making it difficult to see the results of learning, and, in the process, actively discouraging effort: students stay at about the same relative percentile rank, even if they have learned a lot, so why should they try hard? *3)* We group

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students, sometimes within classrooms, and provide de facto different curricula to different groups. As a result, some students never get the chance to study a high-demand, high-expectation curriculum. *4)* College entrance is heavily dependent on tests that have little to do with the curriculum studied and that are designed—like IQ tests—to spread students out on a scale rather than to define what one is supposed to work at learning. *5)* Remedial instruction is offered in "pullout" classes, so that students who need extra instruction miss some of the regular learning opportunities. *6)* We expect teachers to grade on a curve. If every student gets an A or a B, we assume that standards are too low. We seldom consider the possibility that the students may have worked hard and succeeded in learning what was taught.

These are commonplace, everyday, taken-for-granted features of the American educational landscape. They are institutionalized expressions of a belief in the importance of aptitude. These practices are far more powerful than what we might *say* about effort and aptitude. Their routine, largely unquestioned use continues to create evidence that confirms aptitude-based thinking. Students do not try to break through the barrier of low expectations because they, like their teachers and parents, accept the judgment that aptitude matters most and that they do not have the right kinds of aptitude. Not surprisingly, their performance remains low. Children who have not been taught a demanding, challenging, *thinking curriculum* do not do well on tests of reasoning or problem solving, confirming our original suspicions that they did not have the talent for that kind of thinking. The system is a self-sustaining one in which hidden assumptions are continually reinforced by the inevitable results of practices that are based on those assumptions.

ORGANIZING FOR EFFORT: NEW ASSUMPTIONS AND NEW PRACTICES FOR SCHOOLING

It is not necessary to continue this way. Aptitude is not the only possible basis for organizing schools. Educational institutions could be built around the alternative assumption that effort actually *creates* ability. Our education system could be designed primarily to foster effort. What would such a system look like? How might it work? There are five essential features of an effort-oriented

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education system: *1)* clear expectations for achievement, well understood by everyone; *2)* fair and credible evaluations of achievement; *3)* celebration and payoff for success; *4)* as much time as is necessary to meet learning expectations; and *5)* expert instruction. Let us consider each of these features and what the implications may be.

Clear Expectations

Achievement standards—publicly announced and meant for everyone—are the essential foundation of an equitable, effort-oriented education system. If students are to work hard, they need to know what they are aiming for. They need not only to try hard, but also to point their efforts in a particular direction. To direct their efforts, students need to know what they are trying to learn, what the criteria of "good" performance are. Artists building a portfolio of work engage in a continuous process of self-evaluation—aided, when they are fortunate, by friendly but critical teachers and peers. If clear standards of achievement existed, elementary and secondary students could work that way, too, building portfolios of work that they continually evaluate, eventually submitting their best work for external "jurying" to see whether it meets the standards they have been working toward.

An equitable standards system must not just make the goals clear but also must set the same expectations for all students. In the absence of publicly defined standards, our inherited aptitude assumptions lead us to hold out lower expectations for some children than for others. We will go on doing this as long as official achievement standards do not exist. The best remedy, the equitable solution, is to set clear, public standards that establish very high minimum expectations for everyone, providing a solid foundation for effort by students and teachers alike.

Fair and Credible Evaluations

If I am to put out serious effort, I need to know that I will be evaluated fairly, and that those evaluations will be honored and respected. There is more to fairness than the simple absence of bias in tests and examinations, but fair evaluations are also transparent. Their content is known in advance; they can be systematically and effectively studied for. In America today, students rarely have

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the experience of studying hard to pass an examination that they know counts in the world and for which they have been systematically prepared by teachers who themselves understand what is to be examined.

Local tests and exams, usually made up by teachers and administered at the end of teaching units or marking periods, may appear to contradict my claim. Students can study for those, and they are clearly related to the taught curriculum. But, especially for students from poor schools, those tests do not really "count." They are not credible to the world at large. It is understood that an A or a B in an inner-city school does not equal the same grade in an upscale suburban or private school.

A credible evaluation system, one that will evoke sustained effort by students and teachers throughout the system, must evaluate students from all kinds of schools against the same criteria. It must include some externally set exams graded by people other than the students' own teachers, along with an external quality control of grades based on classwork (as in an audited portfolio grading system, for example). Neither of these is a new idea. Some version of external exams and audited classwork is used in virtually every country except ours as the basis for diplomas, university entrance, and employment. Joined with the other elements of an effort-oriented system, this kind of evaluation system constitutes a strategy for optimizing both equity and excellence in our schools.

Celebration and the Payoff for Success

Hard work and real achievement deserve celebration. And celebration invokes future effort. An education system that actively tries to promote effort will make sure that its schools organize visible, important events highlighting the work students are doing and pointing clearly to achievements that meet the publicly established quality standards. There are many options for organizing celebrations. School-community nights can become occasions for displaying work, organizing exhibitions, and putting on performances. Local newspapers and radio and television stations can be recruited to publish exemplary student work or otherwise mark achievements. Community organizations can be asked to participate. It is critical that these celebrations include people who matter

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to the students, and that what is celebrated is work that meets or is clearly en route to meeting the established standards.

For older students, celebration alone may no longer be enough to sustain effort. Adolescents are increasingly concerned with finding their way into adult roles. They will want to see connections between what they are accomplishing in school and the kinds of opportunities that will become available to them when they leave school. This is why many today advocate some kind of high school credential that is based on specific achievements and that is honored for entrance into both college and work. Celebration coupled with payoff will keep the effort flowing; achievement will rise accordingly.

Time and Results—Inverting the Relationship

Schools today provide roughly equal instructional time to all students: a certain number of hours per day, days per year, and years of schooling. As much instruction and learning as can be fitted into that time is offered. Then, at the end of the prescribed period of study, some kind of evaluation takes place. The spread of results confirms the aptitude assumptions of American schooling.

What if, instead of holding time fixed and allowing results to vary, we did the opposite: set an absolute standard of expectation and allowed time (and the other resources that go with it) to vary? That arrangement would recognize that some students need more time and support than others but would not change expectations according to an initial starting point. Everyone would be held to the same high minimum. Effort, then, could really pay, because all students would know that they would have the learning opportunities they need to meet the standards.

Allowing time to vary does not have to mean having young people remain indefinitely in school, repeating the same programs at which they failed the year before. We already know that this kind of additional time produces very little. Instead, schools and associated institutions would need to offer extra learning opportunities early on. For example, pullout instruction could be replaced with enriched, standards-oriented after-school, weekend, and summer programs. Churches, settlement houses, Scouts, 4-H clubs, and other youth service organizations could be asked to join with the schools in providing such programs. A results-oriented system of

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this kind would bring to all American children the benefits that some now receive in programs organized by their parents and paid for privately.

The Right to Expert Instruction

I have been arguing that we ought to create the right to *as much* instruction as each child needs. That is what the time-results inversion is about. But an equitable system requires more than that. It requires *expert* instruction for all children. We are far from providing that. With notable exceptions, the best teachers, and, therefore, the best instruction, gravitate to the schools that teach children with the fewest educational problems. Children who start out with the greatest need for expert instruction are the ones least likely to get it.

That will not do. An effort-oriented system that sets high expectations for all will create a demand—indeed, a right—to expert instruction. To fulfill that demand, it will be necessary to create enhanced instructional expertise up and down the teaching force, so that there is enough expert instruction to go around. This means that new forms of professional development, for teachers now in the force as well as for those preparing to enter the field, are an essential ingredient of the standards and effort revolution.

CONCLUSION

My proposal is, in some respects, a radical one. The effort-oriented education that I am calling for—a system in which everyone in the schools knows what they are working toward, in which they can see clearly how they are doing, and in which effort is recognized in ways that people value—is based on assumptions about the nature of human ability that are very different from those that predominate today. But in other respects, my proposal is a practical and feasible one. It calls for a return in institutional practice to values that most Americans subscribe to: effort, fair play, the chance to keep trying. Most of the elements of the proposal—standards, exams, celebrations of achievement, extended time for those who want to meet a higher standard, expert instruction, and professional development—already exist somewhere in our practice. These elements need to be brought together in a few major

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demonstrations that show the possibilities of effort-oriented practices. Just as aptitude-oriented practices have created confirmatory evidence for assumptions about aptitude, so a few effort-oriented demonstrations can begin to create evidence of the power of effort in creating ability. As evidence accumulates, beliefs will begin to change, and we can, perhaps, look forward to education in America that is equitable in the deepest sense of the word because it creates ability everywhere.

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Linda Nathan

Assessing Assessment: Lessons of Innovative Practice in Urban Schools

IN RECENT YEARS A GREAT DEAL OF TIME and many resources have been focused on the creation and implementation of a system of national standards that could serve as a cure-all for American schools. Standards organizations are in heated competition to be the first to publish the "definitive list" of the content standards in biology, English, art, etc. Goals 2000, the federal government's latest call to arms, promises that if all school systems adopt national standards, teaching and learning will improve and our children will become better readers, writers, and thinkers.

Although I certainly recognize the importance of establishing rigorous benchmarks for student learning, and the value of articulated standards in exposing issues of inequity in schools, I feel that our country's current preoccupation with national standards obscures our understanding of what ails American schools and what must be done to ensure student success. What angers teachers about national standards and national tests is the implicit assumption that the focus on content, or even performance standards, as developed by test makers and educational policymakers, will assist teachers to become more accomplished professionals—better curriculum developers and more knowledgeable about assessment. Many teachers do not see how national standards will create schools that will graduate students who are skilled in posing and solving problems and are able to participate effectively in a democratic society.

We have numerous examples of schools where teachers and administrators are vigorously engaged in the debate over what

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students should know by the time they graduate from secondary school. These educators are experimenting with innovative ideas, implementing changes in the classroom and in administrative practices that challenge our thinking about the assessment of student performance and teaching. Fenway Middle College High School in Boston and Central Park East Secondary School (CPESS) in New York City are two such schools. Serving an academically underprepared population of urban high school students, these schools have achieved notable results: 94 percent of CPESS graduates and 75 percent of Fenway graduates go on to two and four year colleges; the remaining 25 percent of Fenway graduates, as a result of our intensive school-to-work programs, enter career track positions. Both schools, by involving teachers in the assessment of their own work, as well as the work of their students, have made tremendous strides in helping teachers feel more vital and accountable to their school communities. The faculty at both Fenway and CPESS have initiated a process of soliciting and then integrating the viewpoints of outside experts (university professors, professionals in science, art, mathematics, etc., and educational researchers) with those raised in cross-disciplinary discussions that take place in each school. A determination is made through consensus of the faculty with others about what constitutes sufficient mastery in a variety of subject matters. The ability to create high standards for all students, as well as public dialogue and accountability—at the schoolhouse level—merits further understanding.

These two schools have instituted structural features that have changed their pedagogy, curriculum, assessment, and, most importantly, teacher-student relationships. Both schools are based on the belief that schooling is an endeavor into the practice of democracy, and, as such, teachers and students need to debate, disagree, and have opportunities to build consensus. Moreover, much of the success of these schools must be attributed to the fact that teachers have power over the decisions that most affect them—their own roles, the curriculum, assessment, pedagogy, the use of time, scheduling, and budgeting, to name a few.

The organizational structures in both schools require students prior to graduation to successfully present a series of portfolios, in place of the traditional high school final exams; this is an articulated representation of the students' ability to demonstrate their

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proficiency in critical thinking, to question and determine the veracity of an argument, and to reflect upon its relevance and significance (known as "habits of mind"). The faculty must reach consensus on the content of these graduation portfolios, evaluate their quality, and decide on a scoring rubric. This continuous fine-tuning of standards keeps rigor and excellence at the center of the schools' mission. The questions "what is good enough?" and "how do we know?" are debated among and between our faculty, students, and parents, and college professors and teachers from other schools are invited to participate in the process. As one faculty member from CPESS said, "Each year, as we get better and clearer, the standards get higher." This is as it should be. Teaching and learning are not absolute sciences. We learn more each day, and as we integrate and build on this new knowledge base, we find ways to push our students to accomplish more. By inviting outside experts into the school to witness final graduation exhibitions, both schools are successfully experimenting with the creation of rigorous standards that engage and challenge students and help teachers improve upon their practice.

Both Fenway and CPESS are small, alternative schools within large, urban school systems. Their small size (Fenway has 250 students in grades nine through twelve and CPESS has 450 students in grades seven through twelve) facilitates our efforts to nurture and sustain meaningful connections between students and teachers. As a result, we have been able to more productively confront the violence, racism, and poverty that so often negatively impact the learning environment. The strong, positive relationships between teachers and students allow teachers to know more instinctively the stresses that can impede a student's educational achievement, and, more importantly, teachers are better able to identify and build on the strengths of each individual student. These teachers certainly do not let their students "off the hook" because of outside pressures. By understanding and taking the time to acknowledge the personal and social challenges that many young urban students face, students and teachers together can find ways to move forward in the intellectual process.

Educational success of this magnitude is a result of the structural changes that have been instituted within the schools. At both schools, teachers teach no more than eighty students, usually for at

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least two years. This is in sharp contrast to traditional high schools where teachers are responsible for up to 150 students daily. Working with the personal and intellectual knowledge that they have of their students, these teachers structure their heterogeneous classrooms in ways that challenge the most skilled students, yet allow for the flexibility to give extra assistance to those who may need it. The curriculum is less focused on "covering discreet topics" than on understanding fewer topics in more depth. Fenway and CPESS students are provided a number of opportunities to engage in their own research and discovery. Such a process is intended to help students become lifelong learners, to be questioners about the society in which they are participants. The development of "habits of mind," continually addressed in all academic arenas, also prepares students to be responsible citizens, parents, and learners. When students present their final graduation portfolios, the committees are evaluating not only what they know but also how well they use that knowledge.

Another important feature of both schools is their restructured classroom schedule. With a simpler, less fragmented schedule (classes are seventy-five minutes long), teachers are able to go into more depth with their lessons, and spend more time with students in whole group instruction, small group project work, and individual skill building sessions. This allows students more time to focus and reflect upon course content and develop important study skills. For students who have not traditionally been successful at school, it is crucial to provide an atmosphere that models, values, and provides plenty of opportunities for the reworking of a task until it is complete. Our restructured schedule allows students to have an advisory period in which post-high school issues, such as higher education and career options, peer support, networking, and conflict resolution, are explored in depth. We reject the traditional high school schedule, which was built on the factory model of moving hordes of students through a series of classes, because it fails to meet the educational needs of the diverse student populations that we face today. We know from our own school experiences that it is possible to create schedules that allow time for teachers to reflect on their practices and to plan cooperatively, to create learning environments where students have the time they need to engage in intellectual development.

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Another area that has been dramatically affected in both schools is the role and responsibility of teachers. Currently, teachers are encouraged to "leave the classroom" in order to "move up" and perform more interesting work as administrators or district curriculum developers. An alternative model exists at Fenway where we diversified veteran teachers' jobs. We reallocated resources to allow senior faculty members to teach part-time; they are now able to work with student interns and to mentor beginning teachers. This process has reversed the trend of our best teachers leaving the classroom. It has also improved the student-teacher ratio by encouraging all faculty to teach. In many high schools administrators have no classroom responsibilities, but at Fenway and CPESS administrators are either classroom teachers or advisors.

The question of who controls the school budget has received only minimal attention in the education reform debate. We firmly believe that school-based educators, rather than a central office, must have control of how resources are allocated. We argue that schools should receive a lump sum budget (determined by the number of students and the dollar allocation per student) because they are in a better position to decide how that money is best spent. Pushed by the Charter Movement in Massachusetts, the Boston Public Schools are gingerly experimenting with lump sum budgeting for "in-district charter or pilot schools." The idea is that by giving educators control over decisions about curriculum, hiring, and the budget, these schools will chart the way for more effective schools that produce positive results for their students. At Fenway, where we have chosen to remain an in-district pilot school, the issue of fiscal independence—of funds going directly to our school to be used as we determine—remains a key question in our struggle for reform.

There are, throughout this nation, many examples of successful schools. Common to many of these institutions are structural changes that allow teachers to make important decisions about curriculum, assessment, pedagogy, scheduling, time, and budgets. Moreover, these schools, generally small in size, encourage teachers to know their students well and to integrate that knowledge into all aspects of teaching. We have learned that, although it is impossible to shut out the noise and confusion of societal pressures, through school and community-based efforts at dialogue

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and debate, education can be significantly improved in our urban schools. We can create intellectual communities that teach students to use their minds. We have seen young people enter our schools with undisciplined minds and study habits and graduate with a sense of accomplishment and pride at what they know and have achieved. We have seen our graduates successful at their jobs and at college.

Fenway and CPESS are two powerful examples of schools that have instituted organizational change. They deserve to be held up not as "special cases," but as examples of what is possible and ultimately imperative to accomplish for and with young people.

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Harold Howe II

Priority Strategies for Improved Learning

THE RASH OF STUDIES TO ENHANCE LEARNING among American children and youth that emerged in the 1980s can be divided into four categories: *1)* those mainly concerned with improving test scores, which were thought to be dangerously declining and therewith threatening the prospects of our economic system through a work force with limited talents;[1] *2)* those that reached inside the classroom and focused on making the learning process more active, more motivating, and more attuned to the subtleties of skills and knowledge;[2] *3)* those that emphasized the non-school aspects of learning, the roles of families, communities, and other agencies;[3] and *4)* those that focused on the needs of the numerous students who join the work force after high school, and the needs of employers to educate their employees.[4]

NATIONAL STANDARDS AND ASSESSMENTS IN A "SYSTEMIC" PACKAGE

Throughout the 1980s the dominant influence of the so-called "school reform movement" emerged from the strictures of *A Nation at Risk*. It called for more top-down requirements, more and improved tests to measure learning outcomes, enhanced accountability for both students and teachers, and more controls over grade promotion and the awarding of diplomas. The states moved vigorously in these directions, and the new federal legislation of 1994, which sought national standards and assessments, was undergirded by this source of school reform. This top-down strat-

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egy has been augmented by the concept of a "systemic" approach to improve learning, an idea for spreading improvement to all schools as quickly as possible. Although these strategies retain continued support, a counter movement based on findings about classroom activities has gained ground.

CHANGING CLASSROOMS AS A DOMINANT STRATEGY

Studies that looked carefully into American classrooms found a different set of problems in American schools than the low test scores emphasized by such studies as *A Nation at Risk*. The authors of these studies sought different solutions. They questioned the adequacy of supportive human relationships in the conduct of school routines. The use of time in school was found to frustrate imaginative learning activities. Class sizes and teaching loads defeated individualized learning. Teacher planning on a collegial basis was prevented by both school organization and teaching loads. In many schools, learning was a shallow process of feeding back what teachers or textbooks had conveyed. Schools were not only unfriendly places, but they were also frustrating for both students and teachers.

In reaction to these negative findings, these studies sought fundamental changes in the roles of both teachers and students and in the organization of schools. More freedom for individual schools to respond to the needs of their students was paramount. So, too, was moving away from "passive" learning and toward "active" learning, a transition that requires teachers to set aside their routines and to seek to awaken interest among students in new ways. Students, in turn, were asked to take a more active role in gathering information and discussing its many meanings.

These bottom-up changes in classrooms are very different from the top-down strategies of the traditional "school reform movement." They build on the concept of helping teachers and students make schooling an interesting and challenging experience, and they assume that almost all students can succeed. They avoid the negative motivation of the fear of failing that tends to dominate thinking about academic requirements. To a high degree, they emphasize cooperative rather than competitive learning. And early

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in the school experience they wean students away from the simplistic notion that there is a right answer for every question.

The implications of this type of reform are immense. Principals and superintendents become enablers of learning rather than dictators of the circumstances under which it will be dished out. Large, new responsibilities are placed on teachers, and at the same time the door is opened for true professionalism among school teachers—of the same variety valued by teachers in universities.

The theory of classroom-based reform is rapidly gaining ground by redefining the "school reform movement." The most important issue facing American schools today is whether these two types of reform—one from the top down and the other from the bottom up—can accommodate each other. A danger exists that the prescriptive aspects of the top-down strategy will dilute the freedom and therewith the commitment of teachers.

FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES AS SOURCES OF LEARNING

Non-school elements were neglected as sources of learning in the early years of the school reform movement. Although they are getting some attention today, it is still inadequate. Furthermore, a misinterpretation of the effects of family and community on school success hampers the growth of cooperative endeavors between classrooms on the one hand and the family and neighborhood on the other. A false barrier between schools and non-school elements generates suspicion and criticism, pulling them further apart. The school says, "If only parents would do what they are supposed to do, we could be more successful with their kids." The parents' reply is, "Teachers do not understand the problems we and our children live with."

Based on this standoff, some studies of schools have asserted that teachers' roles should be solely academic; they should have no concern for students' home lives, crises, or health problems. It is clearly unreasonable to expect teachers to be responsible for the many non-school problems of children, but they should be aware of the pressures and difficulties with which their students are contending.

A new publication from the Harvard Family Research Project, *Raising Our Future: Families, Schools, and Communities Joining*

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Together, presents detailed information on projects in the United States that are designed to bring families, schools, and communities together.[5] The book opens with a discussion of the gradual growth in America of connections among families, communities, and schools as a strategy to serve young children more effectively; it then moves to a summary of research on such endeavors. The development and operation of seventy-three projects across the country that illustrate experience with this strategy are explained in some detail, including how the projects started and were funded, their declared purposes, their efforts at evaluation, and their varied activities.

Growing poverty among young families and their children, hidden but pervasive racial and cultural discrimination, false assumptions about the talents and interests of girls and young women, and the impact of destructive environments on the everyday lives of children cannot be overcome in classrooms alone. The social interventions aimed at reducing the effects of these pervasive forces will have to bring schools, families, and communities together on a planned basis. Most of that planning will have to be done at the local level, although support for it can come from states or the federal government, as well as from private sources.

Both educators and the general public have some tendency to assume that the non-school problems of children occur mainly among students we identify as being "at risk" because of poverty. Not so! Less and less are children exposed to maturing experiences of informal and collegial contact with caring adults. In the helter-skelter society of modern America the commuting and work habits of adults combine with growing matrimonial instability to leave children with less support than they need—a loss that is aggravated by that "thief of time," television. Concurrently, the shift of sexual mores in our society forces children to confront difficult choices before they are well prepared to deal with them.

Professor James S. Coleman defined an entity that he labeled "social capital." By this he meant the accumulated whole of the common experiences of young people and adults through which they share responsibility, recreation, or social contacts across the generational barrier. Coleman argued that such relationships are steadily eroding in modern societies through a mixture of economic, social, and technological changes:

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> What I mean by social capital is the raising of children in the norms, the social networks, and the relationships between adults and children that are of value for the child's growing up. . . .Altogether, the social capital in family and neighborhood available for raising children has declined precipitously. The cost will, of course, be borne by the next generation, and borne disproportionally by the disadvantaged of the next generation.[6]

Numerous strategies to reinforce the idea of social capital are being tried across our country; some of them are discussed in *Raising Our Future: Families, Schools, and Communities Joining Together*; others are found in mentoring programs; still others emerge from efforts to coordinate social programs more effectively.

Why, you might ask, does poverty have anything to do with school performance? If we give them really good schools, do not all children have the same opportunity for an improved education? Such questions are best answered by other questions. Does a lack of adequate medical care for mothers and children make any difference in the school performance of children? Do unstable families have any effect on school performance? Are hunger and malnutrition, growth stocks in the United States, useful backups for learning? Are there any effects in the classroom from neighborhoods lacking adequate recreational programs, libraries, parks, and organized activities for children? Are imagination, creativity, and the capacity for wonder enhanced by constant exposure to superficial sex, casual violence, and the lack of role models?

Today, Congress is engaged in a debate about providing a safety net for children, particularly those with limited or ineffective support at home and in the community.[7] At the same time, the Clinton administration is loudly proclaiming the need for a national emphasis on improving schools, with new academic standards, assessments of student performance, and concern about the fairness of educational opportunities. As these two banners are displayed from separate islands of government initiative, too little attention is given to the need for a bridge between the islands.

THE TRANSITION TO WORK

Compared with college bound youth, those who seek work after finishing high school are shortchanged in many ways: their schools

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generally provide less help with the transition to work; the United States Employment Service has a limited interest in them (most of its energy goes to serving previously employed workers); and potential employers are much less interested in them. As a result, they tend to flounder from one low paying job to another without health insurance or other benefits. Many lose their way and end up as single parents or petty criminals. In recent years both educators and employers have sought initiatives to improve the options of the non-college bound. New federal programs have also addressed these circumstances, and the Job Corps, invented in the 1960s, continues to serve a portion of such youth. One of the most promising ideas that has emerged about how to serve these neglected youth is combining work and study starting in the last two years of high school or in community colleges. When classroom study is related to work, a motivation to succeed in both realms frequently develops. When young people can see the value of learning reflected in better job opportunities, they perform better in the classroom.

This new American version of apprenticeship holds great promise. Whether it will receive backing from schools, states, and the federal government remains an open question. The Clinton administration has picked up this strategy with both understanding and vigor, but it remains subject to the compromises of budget making and the political rivalries that dominate in Congress.

"THE DIFFERENCE THAT DIFFERENCES MAKE"[8]

This phrase, originally coined by Dr. Melvin B. Levine, captures a topic that is large, elusive, and of top priority in considering our country's future. The United States is undergoing rapid change in several realms: its mix of racial and cultural characteristics; its assumptions about gender roles; its views about pluralism and the symbolic melting pot; its position toward a growing number of Americans with primary languages other than English; its realization of civil rights for all Americans. The scope of this paper is too narrow to attempt any specificity on these issues. All that can be done is to lay out some questions and a few comments that touch upon them: Should a consciousness of these topics permeate our schools? Should they affect who goes to school with whom—

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particularly in the light of the *Brown* v. *Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* decision? What are sensible language policies for schools? What should young Americans learn about their country's diversity—about their own group's stake in it and that of others? Are the educational prospects for women today as open as they should be? What do our differences imply for the professional development of teachers, principals, and other school-based workers? Can parents be enlisted by schools to promote understanding of each other across the differences we have?

When our governors gathered in 1989 to announce the goals of American schools, they ignored these matters. So does the Committee on Economic Development (an organization to study economic and social issues that is maintained by major corporations) in its most recent study of American schools. One cannot help asking why it is that our political and economic leadership shies away from the issues that have emerged from the decline of the Civil Rights movement and the arrival of about twelve million legal immigrants between 1971 and 1990.

Taken together, the impact of these events clouds America's horizons in the next century. America is already deep in an economic rut that promotes the enhancement of the rich, the erosion of the middle class, and an increase in the number of the poor. The current congressional leadership is busy cementing these trends, which arise in part from a belief that most of America's poor are in that condition because of their own shortcomings—a concept that flourishes among the ideologues of the Right and is flatly denied by all balanced research on the subject.

If our public schools ignore the realities of social change and insist upon purveying the myths of the past, they will become less relevant to the lives of students than they already are. It is naive to expect governors to move vigorously into the crosscurrents raised by the above queries. They would be voted out of office. Perhaps there is no viable response to our need for schools to address diversity issues. Therefore, I will close this essay with a question and a brief story. First, the question: If schools do not pick up the issues raised by an increasingly diverse society, will that decision affect the civility on which we depend for maintaining peace and progress?

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Now, the story. One evening, some corporate and political leaders and their spouses attended a formal dinner party at a country club. After drinks, they moved to the banquet room and were seated at a table decorated in its center by a dead moose. The conversation reached its peak in many toasts expressing mutual admiration. After dinner, they returned to their limousines. On the way home, one of the ladies turned to her husband and asked, "Henry, did you notice that moose?"

ENDNOTES

[1]See, for example, National Commission on Excellence in Education, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Education Reform, A Report to the Nation and the Secretary of Education,* David P. Gardner, Chair (Washington, D.C.: National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983).

[2]See, for example, John I. Goodlad, *A Place Called School* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1984); John I. Goodlad, *Educational Renewal; Better Teachers, Better Schools* (San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass, 1994); Theodore Sizer, *Horace's Compromise: The Dilemma of the American High School* (Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin, 1984); Theodore Sizer, *Horace's School: Redesigning the American High School* (Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin, 1992); and James P. Comer, "Reflections on Child Development and Education," *Reflections: Personal Essays by 33 Distinguished Educators,* ed. Derek L. Burleson (Bloomington, Ind.: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1991).

[3]See, for example, National Board of Inquiry (appointed by National Coalition of Advocates for Students), *Barriers to Excellence: Our Children At Risk,* Marion Wright Edelman and Harold Howe II, Co-Chairs (Boston, Mass.: National Coalition of Advocates for Students, 1985).

[4]See, for example, *The Forgotten Half; Pathways to Success for America's Youth and Young Families: The Final Report,* William T. Grant Commission on Work, Family, and Citizenship, 1988; publications of the American Youth Policy Forum, Samuel Halperin, Director, 1001 Connecticut Avenue, Suite 719, Washington, D.C. 20036; and publications and activities of Jobs for the Future, 1 Bowdoin Square, Boston, MA 02114.

[5]Harvard Family Research Project at Harvard Graduate School of Education, *Raising Our Future: Families, Schools, and Communities Joining Together,* Heather Weiss, Director (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1995).

[6]James S. Coleman, "Families and Schools," *Educational Researcher* (August/September 1987): 36–37.

[7]Stephanie Coontz, "The American Family and the Nostalgia Trip," *Phi Delta Kappan* (March 1995).

[8]Melvin D. Levine, unpublished paper prepared for the William T. Grant Foundation study of American Youth and Young Families, 1985, Harold Howe II, Chair.

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Theodore R. Sizer

Silences

WHEN THERE IS FREEWHEELING TALK about the state of America's schools—which I experienced recently at a convocation at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences—the conventional policy wisdoms quickly emerge and ultimately dominate the conversation. We talk continuously about the same things. Only later do we begin to ponder the possibilities of the silences.

The principal and conventional reform policy model, widely bipartisan and observed in one form or another in virtually every state, is a simple and persuasive one: There must be national educational goals. Each state must evolve its own goals congruent with these national objectives. For each of these goals there must be standards and a broad definition of the academic substance implied by those standards. There must be an assessment of the progress toward meeting those goals and standards. Those who rise toward them must be rewarded; those who fail to do so must be dealt with. Only then will major reform emerge.

It is only at the edges of our talk that the silences, the questions that beg for answers, the critical details that call for clarification emerge. Let me articulate four.

First, the goal and standard setting process is usually (as above) articulated in the passive voice, thus leaving undefined who sets these objectives. Speakers use the vaguely inclusive "we," as in "we need national standards." Much though they may deny it, most people making such statements believe that the "we" in-

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cludes them or people just like them. They rarely contemplate the utility of their policies if an opposing political party with a different cultural agenda were to take power. The implicit assumption is that "we" will persevere. When challenged further, some say that such goal setting and assessment is the responsibility of representative government, but, as I have found, they usually obfuscate when asked *which* representative government. Or, recognizing constitutional history, they say "the states," but this puts aside the presumed need for *national* standards. Are all of these American "standards" to be the sum of state efforts, or is there something more? The ambiguity observed in the playing out of the Clinton administration's Goals 2000 policies reflects this confusion.

Virtually absent from such discussions is support for the notion that decisions about educational matters must, to some degree, be insulated from immediate political pressures. Devices to accomplish this are varied, the most obvious being elected school boards—committees that are chosen (at their best) for their views on education writ small and that often serve terms that are not coterminous with those of political leaders. Today's efforts to supersede the authority of these boards and to give mayors (and, at the state level, governors) direct control are widespread and are argued for largely on grounds of efficiency. Legislatures increasingly serve de facto as school boards, making detailed decisions in most jurisdictions previously reserved to units both closer to the children and insulated to some degree from immediate political pressures. In early 1995 the United States Senate set a new precedent with its negatively critical "sense of the Senate" vote on the national history standards statement that recently emerged from a distinguished team of scholars at UCLA. The government of the moment decides.

The notion that there should be some sort of a firewall between educational decisions and the vagaries of immediate politics is today considered quaint. The unmoderated politicization of the curriculum appears in some quarters to be a settled fact.

The "who decides" matter is not a trivial one. Serious education engages the minds and hearts of our youngest, most vulnerable, and most impressionable citizens. The state requires that children attend school under penalty of the law, and this unique power carries with it an exceedingly heavy burden on policymakers to be

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absolutely clear as to "who decides" and why that choice of authority is just. We are dealing here with the fundamental matter of intellectual freedom, the rights of both children and their families.

The silence in mainstream education reform discussion over the last decade about the control of the substance of schooling has been alarming. Only a few civil liberties lawyers, such as Stephen Arons, and the leadership of the Christian Right have raised it insistently. Neither is currently in the political mainstream. Both have powerful arguments that deserve more than dismissive or cavalier attention. And the currently chic policy of asserting "devolution" to individual schools of everything except the very heart of the matter—the goals, standards, assessments, and curriculum frameworks—is a disingenuous diversion. The power to control the school's intellectual agenda remains in the hands of the state; the only "devolution" is of matters of far lesser importance.

Underneath this silence may lie a deep suspicion of democracy, of the ability of the people to decide these matters. Some policymakers are content merely to say, "we have parents on all of our planning committees" and "hearings on these goals and standards were held all across the state." However, when the matter is what goes into *his* child's mind, a protester will say, "I will accept no faceless 'representative' any more than I would accept the same for a decision on serious medical procedures affecting my child's health. The medical regimen—or curricular imposition—that my child is prescribed is a matter on which I want immediate, personal, and insistent participation."

The issue of authority in the shaping of education reform is fundamental. That it is virtually absent in most policy discussions is as wrong headed as it is scary.

Second, current policy strategy depends heavily upon mass testing, conducted with a maximum of specificity to allow comparisons across groups and time. For all sorts of political purposes we make much of "test scores" and issue "report cards" redolent with those figures.

Data about schooling is crucial. There ought to be "report cards." Individuals and government need to know what is going on.

The issue, however, is the quality of the data we currently use. Much of it is full of technical problems and even errors. Most of

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it provides but a slice of a student's or a school's competence. (It is as though one were comparing entire cars knowing only about the functioning of their brakes.) Even when testing authorities protest the misuse of the data—as has the College Board about the wide distortion in the use of SAT scores—the policy community largely turns a deaf ear. Apparently, central governments need "accountability" and will use whatever numbers are available or cheaply produced, however sloppy or distorted they might be. The academic community's tolerance of this intellectual abuse for political ends or administrative convenience is embarrassing.

There have been rejoinders on these matters from such scholars as Harold Howe, Howard Gardner, and Linda Darling-Hammond and from such advocacy organizations as FairTest. Behind these issues, however, lies yet another problem. Few of these scores, of whatever technical sophistication, correlate with the goals that the government has (reasonably) insisted must be met, for example an imaginative and flexible work force. On a simple level—can the individual read, write, and cipher?—they often do correlate. However, on other dimensions, such as those recommended by the report of the US Department of Labor's SCANS Commission for qualities such as persistence, a readiness to undertake hard work, and an ability to understand a matter deeply, they appear not to correlate at all. They do not test for what we need to know.

The point is not that there should be no measures. It is that the measures on which we ultimately depend have to plumb well what we do in fact value. What we care about—the long term intellectual habits and resourcefulness of every citizen—may be difficult to assess, indeed impossible to assess in familiar ways; but to persist with "high stakes" testing that does not address these areas, while pretending it does, is indefensible.

Behind these issues lies a stubborn and corrupting American conceit, that science can easily, readily, and cheaply "assess" the future intellectual power of a young citizen. To persist in claiming that some students and schools are more meritorious than others on the basis of data that fail to measure what is in fact valued is as misleading and capricious as judging the quality of a play by the design of the playbill or how full the theater is on opening night.

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However, we talk little of this matter. It is too painful. The academic machine runs on test scores. Who wants to challenge its fundamental validity? What massive nuisances would that cause?

Third is the lack of attention to the inner workings of schools. The high school is a particular problem here. Its misdesign has been repeatedly researched and described for over fifty years. The critique is familiar. The curriculum is massively overloaded, with a mishmash of programs aimed at social problems ("drug education") and at cultural ones (gerunds, trigonometric functions, and the American Revolutionary War). The "factory system," with students organized by chronological age and shuffled along to six or seven classes in succession, none of which has much intellectual connection with any other, has been mocked since the early part of this century, and particularly in the last fifteen years. The secondary school regimen does not work well for all but the best students, who succeed in spite of the system rather than because of it.

There is virtually no practical recognition in most state plans either of the necessity for fundamental redesign or of the need to reshape policies outside of the schools to reflect what is needed within them. There is little political muscle behind the tough decisions that have to be made in areas such as teacher education, collective bargaining, and the shape of the curriculum. Standards and assessments for "subject matters" continue to be planned in utter isolation from one another, the sum of their parts being a grotesque overload, with each area screaming for attention. The issues of a powerful, general, and essential education are talked about but rarely honored. Those trying to bring some order and focus to secondary education—such as Linda Nathan of Boston's Fenway Middle College High School and Paul Schwarz of East Harlem's Central Park East Secondary School—do so with precious little political or financial support from those "above" them and with the persistent imposition by the school system, the polity, and higher education of conventional practices that have been tellingly challenged by serious research, and some of which barely meet the simplest test of common sense.

One would think that a movement for school reform would consider the workings of schools. Curiously, these matters are little in the conversation. Perhaps we sidle by them out of the fear that the battles they provoke will be fierce. Or perhaps the na-

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tional policy conversation involves too infrequently those who know in detail the ways and means by which schools are kept.

Finally, there is today an astonishing lack of visible anger and embarrassment among politically influential Americans about the realities of growing up and going to school in America. We almost endlessly recite the data about the fifth or more of American children living "below the poverty line." We wring our hands over the latest test results. When we fulminate it is usually about what somebody else is doing or should not do. Most of our discussions are cool, clinical, and easily predictable—so different in affect and determination from those that in the 1960s engaged many school and university leaders. Some of what we did then worked and some did not, but behind our efforts was a sense of outraged determination, particularly when the citizens to whom the reform was directed were poor children. Today that fire is largely absent; it is another silence.

Rage is rarely a constructive force. But cool dispassion breeds a sense that school reform is somebody else's problem, that the tough decisions must be taken elsewhere. Such coolness tolerates the unsettling silences, even breeds them. However, the detachment of our discussion today may not necessarily mean that we care less. Rather, our current coolness may mask a painful, even embarrassing, indecision.

While we keep telling ourselves that "we know what works" (as we did in the 1960s), deep down we may not be all that sure anymore. Even in the favored suburbs, where polls suggest that people are "satisfied," there is some restlessness: there is a resistance to budget increases and a new truculence in dealing with superintendents, principals, and teachers. A more confrontational than earlier "what have you done for my child lately" attitude on the part of parents is common. Behind it may lie a substantial reserve about the quality of even highly favored schools and a belief in the ability of these schools to reform themselves.

The traditional hierarchical bureaucracy, which we deliberately strengthened during the 1960s, now appears to be an impediment rather than an agency for change. The hunch of those who have studied the necessarily "classroom level" character of most learning is that "top down" direction is crude at best and capriciously destructive at worst, a system better at stifling than reforming.

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However, altering the well-established progressive "system," the one where the Big Boys tell the minions what to do, will require bloody battles that most of us would prefer not to join.

We talk of the importance of "public schools in a democracy," yet we know that our "public" schools today are profoundly segregated by class—the wealthy suburbs and the inner city. The contrast between the Lake Forests and the Chicagos, the Scarsdales and the Harlems, is blatant. We all know this, but we mention it as rarely as possible. To achieve a "melting pot"—if that is what Americans want—will require more political will than most can contemplate. And if Americans in fact do *not* want a "melting pot," we dare not bluntly admit that fact. For most of us, changing the subject is the better part of valor.

All of us know that the minds and hearts of our children are influenced in ever increasing ways by information and attitudes gathered far outside the schoolhouse walls, from an insistent media and the commerce that depends on it. In our policy discussions, we barely mention that fact, much less address it. "Policy" remains what the government does with and for the schools. How the schools do, do not, or should connect with the newly-insistent media world is rarely mentioned. We live in an information-rich culture, one controlled by commerce, but we plan the reform of our educational system as though the schoolhouses were still wholly encapsulated units.

And so we continue to advocate the familiar remedies and tolerate the familiar structures and rituals because we find it difficult either to contemplate others or, apparently, to do the wrenching intellectual work that is required to think deeply about learning and teaching and what it means to have and to use a free mind. The government and the universities invest little in these fundamental matters; children and schooling remain stepchildren within and without the academy. We are afraid of that task, and especially where it might lead us, so we avoid even talking about it.

These are some of the silences. They need to be filled.

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Colleges are not very successful in communicating the nature of scientific endeavor or inquiry to those—the great majority—who do not concentrate in the natural sciences. As between the sciences and the humanities, broadly defined, there are large methodological and epistemological differences. So long as the majority of American students situate themselves in nonscientific disciplines, there is an obligation to instruct them in the activity that dominates contemporary culture and yet remains so alien. One problem is to determine what kinds of concrete scientific information would benefit various groups of educated men and women. Another problem is to develop means for instructing undergraduates in certain of the methods and symbolic languages of the natural sciences. Too many colleges and universities have accepted for too long the reality of their students' scientific illiteracy.

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Today, another kind of illiteracy and cultural parochialism also threatens. The interest in foreign languages has declined sharply. Traditional language requirements were clearly insufficient for giving most students any meaningful proficiency in a foreign tongue. This failing contributed to the demand to do away with the requirements altogether, a demand that was sometimes acceded to. Whether or not it was, new experiments are called for that will enable the student to use a foreign language in his or her other studies, particularly in the examination of other cultures.

Thesis 33

From "The Assembly on University Goals and Governance"
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Jeff Howard

You Can't Get There from Here: The Need for a New Logic in Education Reform

AMERICAN EDUCATORS ARE NOT IN THE BUSINESS of preparing all children for the twenty-first century. Instead, they are paid to decide who can learn at high levels, and who cannot. Norm-referenced intelligence tests declare half of our children below average by age seven. Ability grouping is the next logical step; we segregate those we believe to be smart and confer on them exclusive access to rich and challenging curricula. A large percentage of the others, especially in urban settings, are designated as "slow learners" or "learning disabled" at the beginning of their educational careers. They are sorted *out* of math, science, and other rigorous subjects because there is no expectation that they are up to the level of learning required. Children in different tracks are often sent to different buildings, with assignment to "exam," vocational, or general high schools publicly labeling them as gifted, average, or below average. It is a strange brand of education by elimination.

These are not the actions of a few bad apples among the teacher corps, or even of a misguided fringe of educational ideologues. They are standard practices, taught at our schools of education, supported by school boards and parent groups, and considered appropriate even by the people whose children are harmed by them. The effects are predictable and widespread: indifference to learning, declining skills, falling test scores, an increasing mismatch between the requirements of gainful employment and the capabilities of typical young Americans. Many children face serious social and economic obstacles outside the classroom, too, but

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our schools, instead of offering haven and hope, exacerbate the problems with pervasive labeling and exclusion. The failures we deplore are directly attributable to the instructional practices we support.

The first challenge of education reform is to explain why. The answer is neither mysterious nor complicated: self-defeating practices in American schools are logically grounded in shared, erroneous beliefs about learning capacity that prevail in American culture.

THE LOGIC OF THE PRESENT SYSTEM

A simple belief has structured American education for most of this century: intelligence is an innate endowment, fixed at birth and unequally distributed, setting the upper limits on a child's prospects for learning. Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray's *The Bell Curve*[1] is only the most recent exposition of this view; its primary contribution is to make explicit the underlying, taken-for-granted assumptions of our education program. These may be summarized as follows: *1)* There is a distribution of intelligence within what is considered the "normal" human population. *2)* We can specify how much intelligence is needed to learn particular skills and concepts in school, and to fulfill particular vocational or professional functions in adult life. *3)* We can employ standardized tests to measure children's intelligence, and then predict who will be able to master which skills and assume which functions. Ability group placements, matching intellectual demands of curricula to the intelligence of individual children, are made on the basis of these assessments.

I have dubbed this "the innate ability paradigm." It was articulated in the early part of this century by Lewis M. Terman, H. H. Goddard, and Robert M. Yerkes in a campaign that successfully insinuated into the American psyche the idea that genetic intellectual inequality controlled destiny.[2] This idea took hold because it explained social ills like prostitution and criminality in a manner that absolved society from responsibility (the congenitally stupid are strongly inclined toward immorality), and it provided a workable rationale for economic inequality (the poor are poor because they are too dim for work of more than marginal value). The

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"science" of intelligence testing also justified racism and anti-immigrant sentiments; Goddard's massive and methodologically shoddy study of World War I army recruits declared that blacks and Southern European immigrants were mentally defective, which legitimized calls for the scientific management of "defective" individuals and groups, including selective limits on immigration.

The greatest and most lasting impact of these ideas derived from their appeal to the more moderate impulses of practical management of industrial society. As one thinker put it in 1921:

> We can picture the educational system as having a very important function as a selecting agency, a means of selecting the men of best intelligence from the deficient and mediocre. All are poured into the system at the bottom; the incapable are soon rejected or drop out after repeating various grades and pass into the ranks of unskilled labor. . . .The more intelligent who are to be clerical workers pass into the high school; the most intelligent enter the universities whence they are selected for the professions.[3]

It was now possible, through the objective assessment of intellect (made possible by the development of "reliable" intelligence tests), to build education systems that served industry's requirements for both highly educated and low-skilled workers in the proper proportions. It was the role of the school to identify the intellectually able and to sort them from the clericals and laborers, and to train each group according to the requirements of their positions and the limits of their intellects. Tracking people by measures of intellectual potential was already well established before World War II, and has remained a staple of American institutional life since.[4]

"Sort children by judgments of learning capacity; separate the bright from the dull." *This* is the fundamental operating principle of our education program, the imperative that drives norm-referenced testing, tracking, ability grouping, gifted and talented programs, and all the rest. Practices explicitly designed to exclude millions from rigorous education seem entirely reasonable if you believe the requisite abilities to be unequally distributed. By now five generations have received this treatment; we have come to accept it as a fundamental aspect of "the way things are." Most Americans are so well indoctrinated that we meekly acquiesce in

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the practices of judging and sorting, even when negative judgments and inferior group assignments are delivered on our own children. Our teachers were socialized in our institutions too, and learned to regard the traditional practices as *logical*—perfectly aligned with culturally validated beliefs about intelligence. Reform efforts that attempt to replace these practices without first challenging the beliefs that underlie them are regarded as illogical and impractical. In a recent staff development workshop a veteran teacher offered this advice to the frustrated seminar facilitator: "Your 'best practices' are all very interesting, but if you want better output from the schools in this town. . .send us better kids."

Disbelief in the intelligence of our people, rooted in the innate ability paradigm, has effectively blocked education reform in the United States. Here is the paralyzing contradiction at the heart of the failure of our schools: teachers understand the futility of using fancy new pedagogy on children already certified as too dull to grasp challenging material. Thus, the would-be reformer, lost in this bell-curved land, confronts the reply dreaded by hapless travelers everywhere: "You can't get there from here."

A NEW LOGIC FOR A NEW SYSTEM

The discouraging message is logically correct—too many dumb children nullify better instructional practices—but it is ultimately false because the premise is wrong. There is, in fact, nothing wrong with our children. They can learn at advanced levels as well as any children in the world. The mind of a normal child can be developed through practice; learning capacity is a function of will and effort, endowments available to nearly all of us. *High level learning capacity is broadly distributed in the population.* I will ask, for the moment, that skeptical readers suspend disbelief in this assertion as we briefly explore the texture of an approach to education built on confidence—the belief that normal American children, in all their diversity, have the innate capacity to learn at very high levels.

Confidence in the learning capacity of our children is the psychological foundation for an entirely different approach to education, built around a new operating principle: *set aggressive, twenty-first-century standards as high school exit criteria, then align all*

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curricula, policies, and instructional practices to the demands of accelerating the development of all children to meet these standards. Appropriate standards might include mastery of calculus or probability statistics, fluency in a second language, and production of a literate, cogent twenty-five page essay on a topic of literature or social studies. Once exit standards are established, all the operations of school systems will be organized to achieve them. At every grade level, educators will monitor student mastery against clearly defined "benchmark" skills, stepping-stones toward the ultimate standards. Appropriate standards will apply to all children, not just those few designated as "gifted and talented."

In the context of American education as we have known it in this century, the idea of entire school systems committed to achieving high standards with all students is revolutionary; it will require a reorganization of thinking, and policies and practices will have to be driven by a fundamentally different logic. The shift cannot happen in school cultures still dominated by the ideology of innate, fixed intelligence; universal high standards make no sense to educators convinced that only a few can meet them.

We need a dynamic conception of learning capacity to anchor a constructive new logic: think of "intellectual development"—instead of fixed intelligence—as the process of building analytic and operational capability. It is the gradual accretion of skills, knowledge, and learning capacity. Development is fueled by effective effort, that is, a committed, focused, and strategic approach to work. The capacity to commit effort of this kind is a function of children's psychological states, especially their confidence that they have what it takes to learn. In our work with educators we have represented these relationships simply:

Confidence ⟶ Effective Effort ⟶ Development

Effective teachers have always understood this. But in twentieth-century America it represents a new paradigm about learning capacity, and offers a new way of looking at children and the practices we use to school them. Teachers who understand that development is a process take for granted that all the children in their classrooms can learn at high levels if they can be induced to work hard enough. They know that confidence is highly dependent on the character of the learning environment. That is the

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effective teacher's leverage, and the secret weapon of effective reform: build confidence as a basis for committed effort and learning.[5] Normal children operating in environments pervaded by belief, discipline, and structured effort experience achievement, and with it the profound satisfactions of high level learning. This is intrinsic motivation, the basis of personal commitments to development.

Practices that sort and eliminate will make no sense to educators who operate in the new logic of intellectual development, dedicated to the mission of achieving twenty-first-century standards. Now cooperative learning, direct instruction, criterion-referenced testing, portfolio assessments, and a host of other proven strategies will seem reasonable and pedagogically sound. Teachers will begin to fully exploit what Jon Saphier calls the "knowledge base of teaching"[6] and invent new techniques of their own to get all children to targeted standards.

BUILDING A NEW SYSTEM

The commitment to restructure the policies and practices of our schools on the "set aggressive standards/accelerate development" operating principle is the appropriate mission for education reform. Following is a sequence for building such a new system.

First, we must break the hold of the peculiar ideology that declares that the great majority of American children are too dull to learn challenging material. We need a national campaign to transform the public's belief about our children's learning capacities—galvanized by the understanding that belief is the basis of effective teaching and learning and that the lack of it will continue to undermine systematic reform. An effective campaign will harmonize national and local political leadership, local education leaders, and school reformers, all singing from the same hymnal, promoting a constructive belief system with conviction and in language all Americans can embrace. "Getting Smart" is the theme we have used with great effect with children and adults: Smart is not something you just are; smart is something you can *get*.

Second, using this constructive belief system as a foundation, we must win broad acceptance of the "set high standards/accelerate" operating principle; together they establish the logic for effective

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instructional practice. Operating from the new logic, educators will align school policies and classroom practices to the mission of achieving targeted standards.

Third, teachers, principals, central office administrators, and school board members—indeed, all those with authority over schools—will evaluate their effectiveness solely on the basis of improvements in student outcomes. All reform initiatives, including those from sources external to school districts, will be evaluated in terms of their measurable contributions to improve the percentage of children who hit the target.

Fourth, we will use our schools of education and in-service staff development programs to expose educators to the new belief system and instructional strategies consistent with the new operating principle.

Above all, education reform efforts must quickly achieve measurable improvements in student outcomes. The public will no longer accept complicated excuses for continued failure and vague promises about future progress. They have been frustrated with public education for too long, and they are actively exploring other options.

We can take our cues from people like Jaime Escalante, who has taught calculus to some of the poorest children in California, and J. Jerome Harris, who, as Community Superintendent in Brooklyn, presided over significant improvements in the academic performance of some of the worst schools in New York (in 1973, 21 percent of his students were reading at or above grade level; by 1986, this figure had increased to 65.2 percent). Harris achieved similar results in sixteen of Atlanta's lowest performing schools in his first year as superintendent there. Teachers in Tacoma and Detroit, using the Efficacy approach and rejecting ability grouping, have achieved dramatic gains in their students' reading and math performance. These educators, and the small band of others operating anonymously across America, actually teach children from blighted neighborhoods and disorganized families; they set high standards, expose students to challenging curricula, and achieve striking results. Not many teachers do this, perhaps a few dozen in a typical school system, but enough to demonstrate what is possible. Their work proves that learning capacity is not a fixed

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characteristic or the exclusive domain of the gifted and talented, and that committed educators can get results.

In light of this evidence, the raging debate about whether our children are intelligent enough to learn at high levels says more about us than it does about them. We come by our disbelief naturally; all but a small minority of American adults were taught by *their* parents and teachers to regard themselves as less than gifted and talented. Lack of confidence runs very deep in our culture, and shapes our thinking about our children and ourselves. But there is nothing wrong with us. Effective teachers prove it every day. Effective school reform must prove it on a district-wide scale, perhaps in several cities simultaneously. We already have the tools to do it. Some of us must make the commitment, declare our intentions, get the results, and demand that the country pay attention. We will do historic national service if we change the public mind about our children's intelligence. We are smart enough to pull it off.

ENDNOTES

[1]Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles Murray, *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life* (New York: Free Press, 1994).

[2]This history has been thoroughly documented by Stephen Jay Gould in *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1981).

[3]W. B. Pillsbury, from a 1921 article entitled "Selection, An Unnoticed Function of Education," as quoted in Jeannie Oakes, *Keeping Track* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1985), 35.

[4]It does not end with formal education. The human resource practices of most American corporations and many other adult institutions include "potentials ratings"—assessments of intelligence and capacity for success beyond one's present station—used as a basis for tracking individual careers and for managing succession to senior ranks.

[5]The relationship between confidence and effort can work in reverse, too; this is the poor teacher's undoing. Confidence is easily bruised by abusive behavior or by a simple lack of belief. Teachers (and for that matter, parents and communities) who communicate low expectations cripple children's motivation to commit effort. The lack of development that results "confirms" the assessment of limited ability.

[6]Jon Saphier and Robert Gower, *The Skillful Teacher*, 4th ed. (Carlisle, Mass.: Research for Better Teaching, Inc., 1987).

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Madeleine M. Kunin

Education Reform: Staking Out Common Ground

EDUCATION, OUR COUNTRY'S GREATEST COMMON denominator, is also its most frequent divider. Almost every polarizing issue that adults debate is overheard by children and eventually finds its way into the classroom: prayer, violence, immigration, affirmative action, private school vouchers.

The challenge facing education is to confront these important social and political questions without losing sight of the primary mission of public education, which is to create a common core of skills, knowledge, and basic values that will equip an entire generation for a happy and productive life.

This task alone is hard work. It requires a new level of collaboration across a broad cross section of groups, including educators, business and religious leaders, parents, and the higher education community. If we do not join forces, we not only threaten our capacity to strengthen public education, but we will continue to erode confidence in public education itself.

Our democracy depends on citizens' ability to have a shared history and fundamental skills for the future. Simultaneously, we pride ourselves on being strong enough to encourage and sustain heated debate on divisive issues. One trend unites us, the other divides, and the tension between the two has proven to be healthy over time.

However, a prolonged and increasingly acrimonious argument on divisive issues will polarize the education debate to such a degree that the focus on academic achievement will be blocked from view. We must concentrate on preventing this occurrence if

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we are to succeed in the most serious endeavor of giving every child an equal opportunity to obtain a first-rate education, and, thereby, to obtain a foothold in our democratic system.

Never in our history has our education system been more challenged to educate all students to increasingly higher levels of achievement. Those who fell through the cracks in previous eras by dropping out of school or getting poor grades could usually find employment. But that is no longer true. Today 89 percent of the jobs being created require some form of postsecondary training, and virtually all require a high school diploma.

The growing divide between rich and poor in the United States is largely a result of differences in educational achievement. Professor Edward Wolff of New York University recently released a study that revealed that 1 percent of American households owns 40 percent of the wealth, a disparity that is greater than in any other nation in the West. In Germany, high wage families earn about 2.5 times as much as low wage families. In the United States, that figure is over 4 times, and rising. Seventy percent of American youth do not graduate from a four-year college; in the past they were detoured into either vocational education or the aimless "general track," which has failed to prepare high school students for either further education or work. The wage gap between high and low skilled workers has doubled in the last ten years. The good news is that college graduates, who used to earn about 30 percent more than high school graduates, today earn 60 percent more than high school graduates. The bad news is that those without an education beyond high school are severely limited in their capacity to obtain employment. No matter how we choose to interpret these figures, they do not bode well for maintaining a democratic society, for fostering a capable and productive work force, or for retaining the luster of the American dream.

One of the most difficult questions facing public education today is the considerable skepticism about whether all children can learn. We pride ourselves on egalitarianism, but our education system reveals a stratified class structure that divides children at an early age into successes and failures, and at a later stage as college material or non-college material.

According to David Grissmer, a RAND Corporation researcher, some of the greatest gains in math and reading achievement have

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been made over the past twenty-five years by blacks (19 percent) and Latinos (11 percent), a figure that includes newly arrived immigrants. While the gap between these groups and white students—who experienced a 3 percent gain in the same period—continues to exist, it has been significantly narrowed. There is growing evidence that extraordinary schools and teachers make a difference in how all students perform, particularly when there is early intervention and one-to-one tutoring, according to the most recent *Condition of Education* report.

The need to continue to concentrate our rhetoric and our actions on improving academic achievement for all students is becoming increasingly apparent. If we do not educate all children well, regardless of race, poverty, or background, we will have relegated half of the post-2000 work force to unemployment and poverty, deprived the nation of its productivity, and abrogated our commitment to social justice. We must change our fundamental beliefs and practices and dedicate ourselves to making certain that every child has the opportunity to learn.

Sparks of this belief system are found in surprising places. When I visited the Foshay Middle School in south central Los Angeles, I was at first dismayed by the boarded up buildings and the fence around the school, which was as high as a one-story building. But then the principal took me to see the parent center, the tutoring group, and the new girls' volleyball team, and she declared passionately, "No one can tell me these kids cannot learn."

But throughout America too many children are still shunted into special programs that are designed to make their school years easier, but in fact make their adult lives much harder. It is these practices that the call for tough courses, high academic standards, and school-to-work programs are beginning to change. Today there is evidence that since the *Nation at Risk* report was issued twelve years ago, more students are taking tougher courses without diluting the results. For example, between 1982 and 1992, the number of students taking core courses in English, math, science, and social studies increased from 13 percent to 47 percent. Dropout rates have declined and fewer students are taking remedial courses. While the number of students taking the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT I) has increased by 8 percent since 1983, average math scores have risen and verbal scores remained stable.

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We have been through a prolonged period of casting blame on various protagonists in and around the educational system and we have neglected to acknowledge areas of progress. Teachers and administrators are first on the firing line, followed by students, parents, the media, the federal government, and society as a whole. When this list of culprits falls short, one can always blame social trends, like a lack of morals and values. The most dire consequence of this ongoing diatribe against the state of education is that it closes out the thoughtful, civil debate that is necessary to recognize and enlarge upon solutions that already exist in our own communities.

This is where our work must begin. In 1983, *A Nation at Risk sounded the first alarm on the state of American education; it was* a timely and necessary call to action that mobilized both education critics and the education reform movement. It is now time for the reformers and critics to join forces, to identify, explain, and disseminate programs that improve education, and to engage in the monumental but essential task of moving beyond model examples of successful programs to enable success to become the norm.

Such widespread and all-encompassing education reform can only happen if we declare a truce on the issues that divide us and develop coalitions on the issues that unite us. An example of such a new and refreshing coalition is a statement issued by a group of religious leaders of many different denominations on a subject where they found common ground—family involvement in learning: "It is imperative that religious communities join together with governments, community organizations, businesses, and public and private schools in striving to provide families, parents, grandparents, foster parents, guardians, or extended family members with the information, skills, tools, and opportunities. . .that will encourage their participation in the total education of their children. . . ." Later, members of this coalition worked out a joint statement on school prayer.

Each group has a critical role to play in forging new coalitions in support of academic achievement. But "new thinking" will be required all around. The business community, for example, is to be lauded for being a key advocate for Goals 2000, the centerpiece of educational improvement put forward by the Clinton administration, and for maintaining a bipartisan stance as this law was

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adopted by the Congress. Business coalitions, such as the Business Round Table, are to be commended for steadfastly making the persuasive argument to policymakers that we must invest in education if we are to have a well educated work force. But to bring educational success to scale, business will have to make an even greater commitment.

A recent study conducted by the Census Bureau for the Federal Department of Education found that education is the best investment business can make; increases in workers' education levels produce twice the gains in workplace efficiency as investments in tools and machinery. A 10 percent increase in educational attainment produces an 8.6 percent increase in productivity, approximately the same percentage that is gained in employees' income for each additional year of schooling. Employers stand to gain not only from investments in education in the workplace, but also in the schools. Today, few employers ask for an applicant's transcript, thereby severing any connection in students' minds between school and work. The report found that those employers who forge links with schools and consider grades in hiring show higher productivity and innovation. These findings call for a strong endorsement of programs such as the new national school-to-work initiative, which requires employer-school partnerships and apprenticeships for students.

The role of the federal government in building a new alliance for academic achievement will also continue to change. Two new laws, Goals 2000 and school-to-work, as well as a parent involvement initiative that was inaugurated by Secretary Richard Riley are examples of a significant trend that moves the federal role away from micro management and toward partnership. The US Department of Education must apply such flexibility and accountability to all of its programs, and that is the heart of our reinvention process. Most importantly, we have to work with education researchers and practitioners to disseminate success stories more effectively. Parents, teachers, and principals are eager for information, for know-how, for ideas that work, and that is how one successful school can become the mentor of another, until the network of successful schools encompasses the nation.

The academic community also has an opportunity to expand its connections with public education. While some universities and

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colleges provide stunning examples of forging partnerships with neighborhood public schools to raise academic achievement, they are more the exception than the rule. Rarely are such commendable outreach activities on the part of professors or students rewarded, and until "community involvement" is applauded in the tenure track there will be no measurable improvement.

I suggest an additional role for academia—an invitation to enter the larger policy debate on the future of public education. While some academics are heard, many are silent and the result is a lack of symmetry. Much of the discussion about the state of American education today is dominated by the extreme Right, and other experienced voices are rarely heard. It is time they join the fray.

We must celebrate educational progress without dismissing the need for continuous improvement. Perhaps the most debilitating aspect of the constant negative barrage against public education is its demoralization. No system can make progress without hope of success and recognition of achievement. It is time to give educators, parents, and students more of both.

A search through the labyrinth of educational statistics will reveal ample evidence for any argument a critic may wish to make. But there is good news, worthy of celebration, that barely makes it to the back pages. For example, scores for seventeen year olds on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test increased by nine points, roughly equivalent to an additional year or two of learning in high school.

Yes, public education in the United States is not where it should be, but the critical factor that is often missing from debates is that we are making progress in educating a larger number of students to higher levels of achievement than ever before; there are three times more college graduates today than twenty years ago. It would shock most Americans to know that in the good old days of the 1950s, only 34 percent of the population finished high school; in 1992 that figure rose to 82 percent. The downward trend in education statistics, so evident in the 1970s, is turning around. The line on the graph is no longer plummeting.

If we are to continue to expand educational opportunities to more children while adhering to high academic expectations (test scores prove that the two are not incompatible), we must stop tearing down the system that we need to rebuild. Continued ero-

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sion of confidence in public education will inevitably lead to a two-tiered system of education, one that is divided between public and private and between rich and poor. The educational and economic fault line produced by this situation would be impossible to bridge. Already these divisions exist to unacceptable degrees within the public school system, as middle and upper income students are frequently the beneficiaries of a far superior education. If this trend is to be reversed, we need to unite as a nation to provide educational opportunities for all our children and call a truce on the polarizing debates that threaten to incapacitate us.

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[According to 1970 statistics] Higher education is currently available to over eight million Americans, but not to the very poor. A disproportionate number of the very poor are black, though many, of course, are white, American Indians, and Spanish-speaking Americans. Financial aids in the past went largely to upwardly mobile young people who soon became indistinguishable from the majority. In an America plagued by racial disorder and driven by conscience, there has been in the last half dozen years a serious effort to admit black students into colleges and universities. Despite the advances that blacks have made, black students today make up less than six percent of the college population whereas blacks comprise over twice that proportion of the national population. As for low-income whites in urban and rural slums, very few efforts are being made to secure higher educational opportunity for them. The situation of the American Indian and Spanish-speaking American is even more discouraging. Without claiming that all young persons should be in college, a matter dealt with later, the failure to educate students of low-income families, whatever their race or ethnic origin, ought not to be countenanced. Such students should be sought out by colleges and universities. Public monies should be available to those institutions that share in this national higher educational obligation.

Thesis 1

From "The Assembly on University Goals and Governance"
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Howard Gardner

Limited Visions, Limited Means: Two Obstacles to Meaningful Education Reform

DISSATISFIED WITH THE QUALITY OF THE WORKERS that they have been hiring, many CEOs of major corporations believe that it is necessary to improve the quality of American public education. They also believe that it is possible to do so. After all, following decades of apparent success during which they were organized as immense bureaucratic structures, American corporations have had to alter their assumptions and their practices in quite radical ways. The most successful enterprises have been chronicled by Peter Senge, Peter Drucker, and Tom Peters; the least successful survive only as case studies to be used by business school students.

Analogies between business and education are risky. Still, there is certainly a consensus among the knowledgeable—of both progressive and traditionalist stripes—that American schools can no longer continue to operate as they have in the past. Why, then, does meaningful education reform seem almost as remote in 1995 as it did in 1983, the year when the nation was first alerted to the risks lurking in its current educational system?

I submit that significant reform can come about only if two conditions are met: *1)* The broad public must be persuaded that reform is needed; *2)* teachers (as well as administrators and parents) must favor certain core proposals for reform and be capable of implementing them.

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Unfortunately, neither of these conditions is close to being met on a wide scale. While Americans are quick to condemn schools for "other students" in "other communities," polls indicate that most parents continue to be satisfied with their own children's schools and teachers. Even those who are unhappy with schooling rarely become enmeshed in discussions about school bonds or school boards; they prefer more individualistic solutions, like switching schools or teachers, or even home schooling.

Further, when one probes public attitudes toward schools, a yawning gap emerges between the issues stressed by school reformers and those stressed by the public. As chronicled by pollsters, the public's chief concerns about the schools revolve around the safety of children and the incidence of drugs and violence in the schools. Surely, no one would question the importance of these concerns, but one searches in vain for mention of those topics that have energized school reformers in the last decade: more individualized settings; richer curricula; revised schedules; new forms of assessment; lengthier classes, school days, or school years; cooperative learning; school-to-work transitions. It is as if discussions of school reform were taking place in two worlds, hermetically sealed off from one another.

During a decade of involvement in school reform, I have spoken to thousands of "ordinary" parents, students, and community members. What I hear bears little resemblance to talk among educators or to writing in professional educational publications. Again and again, I hear that teachers' jobs are relatively pleasurable and undemanding and their tenure enviable; that there should be more testing, more training of basic skills, fewer frills; that teachers should be able to handle discipline problems in the class as they were handled in the olden days. Again, the point is not that these remarks are wrong, but rather that they are remote from the concerns of those who have been most vocal within the educational ranks.

If school personnel and reformers are to go beyond conversation among themselves, if they are to reach the public, they must first either satisfy the public's concerns or they must convince the public that school reform is compatible with, and may perhaps even help to bring about, schools that are safer and students who can achieve at much higher levels. I believe that it is possible to

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create an educational environment that satisfies the desires of both educators and the general public, but I also believe that genuine dialogue between the parties has scarcely begun.

When it comes to bringing about change, the analogy with business provides little help. American businesses did not "reform" just because of some promising new ideas. Corporations were compelled to reform because they were losing markets to foreign competition; they and their stockholders knew what failure would look like. In contrast, crises in education have more insidious onsets and less obvious immediate consequences.

I believe that many of the widely recognized problems in American society—ranging from the decline of civility to the loss of job security—are linked to American schooling. I also believe that key problems could be dealt with if we could institute different forms of schooling. But unless these points are made convincingly and repeatedly by individuals in positions of authority, and unless instances of success can be publicized for all to see, there is little chance of changing the public perception of the possibilities for education reform.

Let us suppose that, magically, there emerged a consensus between traditionally oriented reformers (Diane Ravitch, Chester Finn, E. D. Hirsch) and progressively oriented reformers (Theodore Sizer, Henry Levin, Deborah Meier). Let us suppose further that this consensus persuaded business leaders and the general public. Indeed, as part of this leap of the imagination, we can even outline some of the features of this consensual compact: a streamlined curriculum focused on a few basic subjects; high, well-publicized standards that emphasize the ability to exhibit mastery in a subject in front of peers and experts; instruction that is maximally individualized, so that students can learn and advance at their own pace; K-12 curricula that are properly aligned and that embody the conclusions of experts while speaking as well to the values of the community; pedagogical leadership and fiscal management at the schoolhouse, with a streamlining of district bureaucracy and procedures of accountability.

Reaching such a consensus would not be easy, but implementing it would prove far more difficult. Most of us think of school in the way that we experienced it when we were young (or, perhaps, the way that we *remember* experiencing it), and most of us teach

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(formally or informally) the way that we were taught. Teachers are no different in this regard. Even teachers who are not comfortable with current arrangements have difficulty thinking about education in dramatically different ways. Many observers concur that, over the decades, procedural changes have proved much easier to implement in the schools than changes in the curriculum and pedagogy.

For teachers to embrace such a new compact and implement it successfully, three things would have to happen. First, teachers would have to believe that the new ideas were worth attempting, and, indeed, of sufficient merit to warrant the scuttling of long held beliefs and practices. Second, teachers would have to develop skills that would enable them to teach (or, better, coach) and assess in these new ways. Third, teachers would have to think of themselves not as implementers of someone else's philosophy but as a new breed of professionals, who take responsibility for their profession in the way that architects, doctors, and lawyers are reputed to do.

Despite the formidable challenges, I believe that the seeds for such a revolution have already been sown. Over the last decade, several thousand schools (with their tens of thousands of teachers) have made a commitment to a significantly different form of education, along the lines of the compact sketched above. Of these, several hundred, at the very least, have experienced genuine changes in teaching and learning. Many of the most successful serve as models for reform elsewhere, through their central positions in networks of schools and through their willingness to share their practices with interested educators and the general public. And, if my own experience is any indication, the hunger for these innovations has only grown over time.

One must, therefore, ask why the work of such reformers as Theodore Sizer, James Comer, Henry Levin, Eric Schaps, and Deborah Meier, just to name the most prominent, is still not widely known among the general public, why the critics of school in general continue to garner the lion's share of attention in the media. My own guess is that two factors have converged to yield this lamentable situation: *1)* The media's insatiable thirst for bad news and concomitant reluctance to chronicle success, except as a

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curiosity; *2)* the desire on the part of certain conservative forces to gut the public school system altogether.

While one can create miracles for the purposes of an occasional essay, they are unlikely to occur in reality. If we are to realize a significant move towards better schools in this country, we need to invoke the educational equivalent of "blood, sweat, tears, and toil." The vision that sustains those of us in reform is that the innovations will eventually achieve a critical mass, and that what has been seen as exotic may come to be viewed as within the norm.

Going beyond means, beyond tactics, I believe that school reform is unlikely to coalesce and endure unless both teachers and the general public unite around a common vision. My own experiences as a reformer suggest to me that school reform is most likely to succeed if this vision encompasses a few key ideas that resonate with people's experiences: *1)* one learns best within a supportive community; *2)* human beings differ from one another and we should stretch to find ways to help each individual achieve his or her full potential; *3)* it is worth striving to understand something in depth and to apply that understanding in new and unfamiliar situations.

Business "gurus" tell us that such themes have been important for mobilizing sustained efforts in the corporate world. If the gaps that have stalled reform efforts are to be overcome, education reformers should embody these themes in their own work. These efforts should be brought to the attention of the wider public to demonstrate that the "new education" addresses the very issues about which the public continues to be concerned.

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There is no optimum size for colleges and universities. For some students and teachers the small school will provide the most gratifying experiences. At larger colleges and universities, there are more choices. This is not to say that the increase in choice is at all commensurate with the increase in size. Large institutions should create programs and facilities that provide the option of a more intimate scale; this can be accomplished at some places through creating a variety of small colleges within the larger campus, or through other, more modest ventures.

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Higher educational institutions in America, to their detriment, are imitative. The "front-runners" are constantly aped by those with more limited resources. As a result, though there are over 2,500 institutions, they converge on a few models. Policies designed to produce greater differentiation, though difficult to fashion, are essential. Colleges and universities should become more discriminating in relating their resources to particular needs, less worried about their standing (often a mythical one) vis-à-vis other institutions, and more determined to develop experiments in every aspect of institutional life. If these things were done, the claim of American higher education to being pluralistic would begin to approach reality.

Thesis 76

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Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

Education for the Twenty-First Century

WITH DISMAL REGULARITY, we return to efforts to improve K-12 education. These efforts usually fail because education is conceived narrowly as schooling. Yet, improvements to schools do not necessarily correspond to an improvement in the education of children. Whether or not children will learn does not depend primarily on what happens in school, but on the experiences, habits, values, and ideas they acquire from the environment in which they live.

Another limitation of schools is that they concern themselves almost exclusively with the development of cognitive skills, or the passing along of factual knowledge and—at best—critical thinking abilities. Knowledge of facts and how to interpret them will not result in an educated population unless some wisdom—or the goals and priorities that justify the use of knowledge—is also acquired. Thus, instead of concentrating exclusively on schools as the sites for change, we must take into account the broader processes involved in formative education.

Formative education (i.e., what Germans call *Bildung*) is the result of a continuous process of interaction between individuals and the environment. Children are formed by their experiences with parents, teachers, peers, and even strangers on the street, and by the sport teams they play for, the shopping malls they frequent, the songs they hear, and the shows they watch. The citizens of the next century will be a product of these various social forces. Schools, while certainly important, contribute only a relatively modest fraction to the education of the young.

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For instance, American adolescents (twelve to thirteen years of age) spend about 20 percent of their waking time studying in school or at home. They spend almost as much time (18 percent) just being with friends, 6 percent watching television, 4 percent playing games and sports, 2 percent listening to music, and 3 percent reading magazines and books. Each of these experiences contributes to the shaping of the young person's mind and character, sometimes vastly out of proportion to the time spent in the activity. One song heard on the radio or one conversation with a friend can have a more profound effect on a child's future than a thousand hours spent in school.

The social environment is perhaps even more crucial for a young person's future development. Most of the time adolescents are either alone (26 percent) or with friends (34 percent) and classmates (19 percent). Very little time is spent in the company of adults. *The typical American adolescent spends only about five minutes a day alone with his or her father*—not nearly enough to transmit the wisdom and values that are necessary for the continuation of a civil society. Even less time is spent in a one-on-one interaction with a teacher or other adult.

These facts are particularly significant when considered in conjunction with the rapid technological changes and consequent changes in life-style of the past few centuries, and especially of the last few decades. During most of human evolution, life experiences remained stable. Human groups could observe which practices had positive consequences for the formation of the young and which had negative ones. This slowly accumulating knowledge could then be applied to education in a way that was relatively effective given the stage of development of the society. But since the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution, the life experience of young people has been transformed again and again, and we have not had a chance to evaluate and understand the impact of these changes on the formation of individuals.

What are the effects of "age segregation" on young people? Do children and adolescents who spend their time primarily with their peers develop a less binding sense of responsibility than those who spend more time with adults? How do consumption patterns affect character development? Do young people with disciplined consumption habits have different values than those whose con-

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sumption is unrestrained? How does the amount and kind of television viewing affect the education of young people? How can we help young people lead lives that are full of energy, joy, and meaning, when their life-styles encourage passivity, boredom, and alienation?

Of course, it is extremely difficulty to answer such questions in a scientifically valid fashion. Because it is neither possible nor desirable to perform controlled experiments that may have drastic effects on the subject's life, the study of such issues must be restricted to observations and to naturally occurring experiments (such as recording the effects of the introduction of television in a community that had no access to it before). But without performing controlled experiments it is very difficult to separate causes from effects. For example, restrained consumption is likely to be the result of family values, so if a child with disciplined habits has different values it may be impossible to say whether those values are caused by his consumption habits or by previously existing family values.

Despite such very real difficulties, it is becoming rather clear, even in the absence of controlled experiments, that many of the trends taking place are deleterious to the education of youth: Heavy television viewing and academic achievement do not mix. Spending too much time with peers does not bode well for later adjustment to productive adult roles. Gangs may fill the need for identity and discipline, but in the process they can destroy entire neighborhoods.

We do have many bits and pieces of knowledge about the forces that shape children's lives. But we lack a total picture, a workable blueprint that could serve for a societal intervention that is more than a local, partial solution. For this latter purpose, it is essential to lay down the foundations of a comprehensive study of the various forces that shape the hearts and minds of our children. Of course, much money has been spent already on research on children without great visible benefits, so it is understandable that one might be skeptical about the usefulness of spending any more. But scattered attempts at solving the problem will not work. What we need now is an approach that is interdisciplinary, combining all the perspectives bearing on the study of children's lives in their actual context, from anthropology and economics to psychology

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and sociology, and that is closely tied to community and business initiatives for change, so that the findings can inform action. Only such an approach can generate understanding.

Without such understanding, the formation of future generations will be left to chance. Given the highly unnatural environment in which we now live, such a laissez-faire attitude is very dangerous. With the best of intentions we might create conditions that would hinder the psychological development of our children. Past wisdom, which might have been adequate when the conditions of life were relatively stable, is no longer adequate to give a sensible direction to our educational efforts.

WHY A LAISSEZ-FAIRE APPROACH WILL NOT WORK

One of the central dogmas of our times is that market forces, left to themselves, will eventually correct most social problems. In the present case, this approach would suggest that sooner or later children will choose the environments and conditions most suitable to their needs. They will live in the healthiest communities, read the most useful books, study what teachers expect them to study, listen to the best music, buy the commodities that will make them happiest now and in the future.

The invisible hand may direct the convergence of supply and demand in the marketplace, but it is helpless as an effective educational force. No matter how full of intuition and enthusiasm young people are, they lack the experience and the knowledge to choose among the options presented to them in such a way as to optimize present and future well-being.

Conversely, market forces direct those who provide for the needs of young people to produce goods and services that are clearly against the best interests of young consumers. It is easier and cheaper to sell "junk food" than healthy food. It is easier and cheaper to make movies based on sex and violence than to make movies portraying more complex thoughts and emotions. It is easier and cheaper to build houses and neighborhoods that provide basic needs for comfort and security, but leave out the equally important needs for social interaction, adventure, beauty, and awe. Naturally, the easier and the cheaper options will be chosen, and they will shape the experiences of the next generation.

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Since the end of World War II, adults in Western societies have, in effect, declined the educational role, with the exception of intellectual training and instruction. A widespread sense of impotence and guilt has led to the belief that children might in fact know better than their elders what values are important and how they should live. Many parents, teachers, clergymen, and politicians have concluded that they have nothing to teach young people in terms of beliefs and values.

Such humility is in part appropriate because the life-styles of many parents, and the values on which they were founded, were severely flawed. This does not mean that we can give up the responsibility for educating the young. For better or worse, we must clarify what we believe is best for those who depend on us, and then try to implement it without hypocrisy and subterfuge.

WHAT CAN BE DONE

While it is imperative that our understanding of the forces involved in the formation of the next generation be comprehensive and systemic, so that we do not miss the potentially important interaction between different conditions, prudence dictates that we should focus on the most promising questions first. A possible approach would consist of three distinct steps.

Mapping the field of forces. A group of eminent scholars could be commissioned to prepare a document describing the major conditions involved in the formation of the young. These would include such institutions as the family, the neighborhood, the community, the schools, the voluntary associations, the media, and the economy, as well as such physical influences of the environment as the purity of the air, the water, the diet, and health in general. The report might also include evaluations of interviews and focus groups with children and adolescents.

Choosing targets for research and intervention. On the basis of the document described above, those interested in helping with this problem could select for further study one or more factors that may be amenable to change. For example, the role of the media in the formation of the young or the impact of the living environment on the life experiences of young people.

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Diffusion and implementation of the findings. Once the results of the various studies of the impact of the environment on the formation of young people are collected and integrated, the next logical step is to find practical ways to use the information. All too often useful psychosocial research fails to be implemented because there is no connection between the generation of information and its application. In this case—provided important new facts actually emerge as a result of the preceding steps—as much effort should be devoted to the application of the findings as was devoted to the collection of the information.

Efforts should be made to inform systematically—and *dramatically*—the media, political and educational leaders, and philanthropic organizations of the issues involved. And the relevant parties should be challenged to implement some of the conclusions of the studies.

THE OUTCOME

What should be the main result of the intervention in formative education? It could be argued that the most important outcome is the health and longevity of young people; or their intellectual training, which will make them affluent and competitive in a rapidly changing technological future; or the development of their moral behavior. These are certainly important goals to strive for, but perhaps they are not the most essential ones.

I would suggest that the guiding principle for a successful education is helping young people to be happy now, as well as in the future. Of course this is not a revolutionary idea: Aristotle had already noted twenty-five centuries ago that health, knowledge, power, and wealth are good only insofar as they make us happy. We want to be healthy and rich because we expect that these things will make us happy, but we want happiness for its own sake. The founders of the great American experiment in democracy considered the pursuit of happiness to be one of the most basic of human rights, which it was the government's responsibility to protect. It is the legacy of the Enlightenment that we are now in danger of losing forever.

But contemporary research on subjective well-being and life satisfaction confirms what Plato and Aristotle already realized:

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young people (and many adults as well) are not very well informed about what leads to happiness. Often we take shortcuts to save energy and settle for small and momentary pleasures. Or we engage in pleasurable activities that lead to dead ends or sour into addictions. It is for this reason that Plato wrote that the most important task of educators is to teach young people to find pleasure in the right things.

The most enjoyable experiences do, in fact, tend to come from the "right things." That is, from activities that require skill, concentration, involvement: the arts, sports, music, a well-designed science experiment, the solution of an intriguing math problem, a good conversation, a job well done. These are activities that lead to formative education, to personal growth, and to a lasting sense of happiness. In contrast, purposeless activity and passive entertainment are experienced as relaxing but rarely produce happiness.

We certainly cannot change this situation by simply telling the young that purpose and discipline will make them happy. The only convincing argument is the one made by example. It is for this reason that the isolation of young people from adults has such tragic consequences. If parents spent more time with their children, introducing them to the things they love—whether music or fishing, computers or volunteer work—the problems would surely diminish. But not every parent can do this. In such cases, the community must pick up the slack. Not because this is its moral duty, but because if the community cannot convince the great majority of its members that life can be enjoyable and meaningful, it will be destroyed by a generation of desperate people.

The problem is that in our current environment opportunities for passive and purposeless behavior seem to far outnumber opportunities for experiencing active, growth-producing happiness. The life-styles of even our most fortunate children, while providing comfort, physical health, and material objects, rarely offer possibilities for excellence. And because schools conceive their task to be to pass on information rather than to foster the love of learning, children tend to forego the serious pursuit of formal education. As a result, they are enticed instead into habits that promise happiness, but soon produce bitterness and a sense of failure, eventually leading to either resignation or rebellion. The central purpose of educational policy should be to understand

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better the dynamics of happiness and to find ways to increase its occurance in the lives of the next generation. More than any other goal, this one is most likely to lead to a future worth hoping for.

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Paul Schwarz

A Call for True and Equitable Discourse

THE VIEW FROM THE CONFERENCE ROOM was of ice-covered trees on the Friday morning our meeting started. Inside, a fire burned in the fireplace and coffee and muffins were served. Some of us already knew one another and, in the rather formal surround, chatted pleasantly. We spoke in quiet voices. We got off to a strong start.

But soon resentments and grievances surfaced and they reminded me of what so many Americans these days seem to be feeling—left out, divorced and alienated from sources of power and decision-making. Those who work in schools seemed prickly and thin-skinned. To relax and enjoy this luxury felt wrong, like we were being co-opted not embraced. Trying to make sense of the tension I was witnessing became as important as the substance of the meeting.

When my turn came to introduce myself, I mentioned the beauty of the setting. I voiced my wish to have places like this available to teachers for their out-of-classroom work. In retrospect, I was feeling more than mere envy. The same was true of my reaction to the makeup of the group gathered. Only three or four were "in-school" people and most were white men. I couldn't help but wonder how many of the people that I work with daily would be dismissive of anything that came from a group like this?

The anger that erupted at the meeting from time to time came mostly from a member of the in-school group. This prestigious gathering was a reminder of the existence of a whole industry of public policymakers, academic researchers, and university based

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educators who consider themselves in a position to diagnose and prescribe work for others, be they students, teachers, principals, or parents. This tradition of estrangement strangled our conversation.

The assignment for this essay is a case in point: "...*Would it be possible for you to write in two thousand words or less an essay on the following themes: What, in your view, is the single most urgent problem confronting the United States in public school education, elementary and secondary, and what, if anything, can be done to begin to treat that situation before the year 2000?*" Implicit in the question is an assumption that "smart people" come with a built-in expertise that enables them to grapple with such issues. It is a request that sets in-school people on edge. "Where will you be next Monday?" we want to shout.

This conflict has a long history, but if we are serious about the quality of the change required, a wide variety of people must be willing to dig in for the long haul. Of course there are some broad issues to be considered across boundaries of expertise and localities, but a close eye must be kept on their relationship to particulars.

The problem is both generic and particular, both local and national. The solution will require wisdom in East Harlem and Boston, in Taos and Scarsdale. We can help each other by looking and listening to one another, but not if we imagine that our "smart answers" have not been thought of before, even tried. What we need to know and respond to is what happened and why.

In-school people will learn to listen to what experts say only if and when they feel respected and empowered. The separation from power starts inside schools. Many teachers (and principals) feel powerless in their day-to-day work, dictated to by superintendent's regulations, preset schedules, state (or national) standards and assessments. For example, in New York City for many years schools have been heavily restricted in their ability to order materials.

Schools confront wildly changing needs that find their etiology in both worldwide and community trends. The New York City school system is expanding by over twenty thousand students per year. Its budget, however, remains fixed. Many of these students

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are students of high school age from other countries. Overwhelmingly they are from families with limited financial resources.

Because our specific concerns are not heard or seen by the experts, we shout, "No more theory!" when we know perfectly well that the best schools rest upon a unified vision or theory. As a result neither form of expertise is fully utilized.

And the issues are infinitely more complicated than building a new type of car or putting a man on the moon. They involve teaching young men and women to be thoughtful, compassionate citizens of our society, capable of a degree of intellectual rigor and self-discipline that we did not demand of any previous generation. The "raw material," the children who come to school each day, presents a variety that is awesome and wonderful, but hardly accustomed to tackling such demands.

As we met together we did find consensus in the belief that major changes in the schools are called for and that parents, teachers, and administrators, whether motivated by nationally defined concerns or locally initiated restructuring efforts, are powerful agents of change. Conversations in schools need not be provincial nor isolated from the outside world. Conversations between parents and teachers, teachers and students, teachers and administrators, principals and superintendents are all subject to the tension produced by the question, "Who is the expert?" The answer, of course, is that all the parties must bring their own expertise to bear. The issue is not "who has power over whom?" but rather, "how do we marshal the power to change and improve education for all students?"

The conference and this writing assignment set me thinking about the difficulty of these dialogues. We have not smoothed the rough edges, and perhaps we will not for some time to come, but we had better figure out how to work around them. Never before have we had such lofty goals for education. The slogan "all children can learn" reflects an attitude, a set of beliefs and dreams that will require substantial changes in the fundamental nature of schooling. These changes will require true and equitable discourse across communities.

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Educational experiments often take place on a single campus. They are rarely studied or evaluated by other colleges or universities that stand to profit from knowing about them. Inter-institutional cooperation in educational experimentation ought to become more common. It is possible for a group of institutions to plan specific educational reforms jointly, to try out variants of these on individual campuses, to monitor these experiments, and to learn from them. These experiments would then be the common concern of all the institutions involved. Each would have invested funds and manpower resources. Each would have an interest in incorporating into its own programs the results achieved.

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The primary and secondary schools of the country, responsible for the education of the young during what is incontestably the most formative period of their lives, bear a heavy instructional and social burden. Many colleges and universities have been generally unimaginative in considering how they might cooperate with these schools, to the advantage both of students and institutions. It is time that more universities accepted a responsibility in this matter, and did not locate it solely in their professional schools of education. This is an important need which cannot be satisfied by traditional methods. The colleges and universities stand to gain immensely from new kinds of cooperation with schools, and they ought to arrange for them. The task will be difficult, often frustrating. It will call for political, organizational, as well as intellectual skills.

Thesis 85

From "The Assembly on University Goals and Governance"
Dædalus (104) (1) (Winter 1975)

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Paul R. Dimond

A New Challenge for American Education

THE FAULT LINE IN THE AMERICAN ECONOMY is education. This statement has been true for almost a full generation and continues to be true. Those with skills prosper; those without fall behind (see *Figures 1* and *2*).

The good news is that we all can learn the skills that will empower us to cross this fault line. Each year of postsecondary education or job training increases a person's average earnings by 6 to 12 percent. Employer training also substantially raises the average weekly earnings of all workers, whether they have a high school degree, a college degree, or some college education (see *Figure 3*). A recent employer survey indicated that a 10 percent increase in worker education is associated with an 8.6 percent increase in firm productivity—well over twice the payoff from a 10 percent increase in physical capital.

The bad news is that during the past generation many Americans remained on the wrong side of this fault line. From 1950 to 1978 family incomes more than doubled, and all income groups shared in this growth (see *Figure 4*). But growth in family incomes has since stalled: at the slow rates of growth experienced since the mid-1970s, it would take almost *two centuries* for median family incomes to double. Averages tell only part of this disturbing story: while the wealthiest 5 percent captured over 50 percent (and the top 20 percent over 95 percent) of the meager growth in family incomes (see *Figure 5*), the majority of families suffered a decline in real income from 1979 to 1993 (see *Figure 6*).

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These statistics on family incomes and the returns to skills, however, only describe the *results* of the story of economic change over the past two generations. To understand the challenge to our future prosperity—and to American education—we need to understand the nature of that change.

A HISTORIC CROSSING TO A NEW ECONOMY

Fundamental changes have occurred in the nature of work, the means of production, and the firm over this century. In 1900 the manager of the typical American business enterprise closed the barn door at night to make sure that the most valuable assets—animals, feed and seed, and equipment—on the farm would be there when the rooster crowed in the morning. Since then there has been a continuing revolution in agriculture production, organization, and distribution: today a tiny fraction of the American work force produces all of the nation's food.

In 1950 the manager of the typical American business enterprise locked the gates to the single-story, long-line industrial factory at night to make sure that the most valuable assets—the building, equipment, and inventory—would be there when the plant whistle blew in the morning. United States mass production was the envy of the world. Millions of persons with relatively low skills worked to achieve what had never before been thought possible: a full generation in which a majority of Americans earned middle-class incomes and owned homes. Upward mobility was increasingly available to those who were willing to work hard.

Starting in the mid-1970s, however, the economic growth that fueled this dream subsided. The comparative advantage of America's old mass production model eroded for several reasons: competition from abroad increased; technological innovation reduced the demand for low-skill labor; and customized "lean" production replaced mass production.

During a difficult, two-decade transition, America's most productive manufacturing firms reorganized to meet this challenge: they shifted from the old, hierarchical means of mass production to integrating high-skill work forces and advanced technologies into high-performance workplaces, with frontline workers assuming far greater responsibility for the quality and added value of

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their products. By 1995, American manufacturing firms in many sectors were once again the most competitive in the world, with sustained rates of productivity increase exceeding 3 percent per year. But along the way, many plants closed, many workers were laid off, and wages stagnated in the remaining old-style mass production plants; many industry sectors have yet to complete the transition to high-skill, high-wage, high-performance production.

In addition, wage levels and rates of productivity increase have generally been lower in the service sector than in manufacturing. Increases in productivity seldom reached 1 percent per year in the service sector, and the once vaunted computer appeared useful only for speeding up repetitive clerical and calculating tasks. For years, Senator Patrick Moynihan has argued that slow economic growth necessarily results when the service sector grows as a share of the total economy, because it is impossible to increase productivity in the service sector. Peter Drucker puts this same point differently: the nations and firms that learn how to increase productivity in the service sector will dominate the world economy in the twenty-first century.

Scattered evidence is emerging to suggest that some firms in the service sector are learning how to increase productivity through more responsive means of production and distribution and by adding more value to service products. New generations of networked personal computers, software and groupware, and interactive telecommunication are being integrated into fundamentally reorganized, knowledge-intensive workplaces where frontline workers are empowered to add more value—in communication, marketing, design, distribution, professional, health, information, and technical services. As with the increases in productivity associated with the transformation in the manufacturing sector, the transformation of firms in the service sector offers the potential for sustained increases in productivity and added value. Indeed, it is possible that whole new industries may emerge as the old divisions between the manufacturing and service sectors break down. The fastest growing occupations involve learning and applying higher skills to higher value-added work: technicians, professional specialty, design, precision production and repair, executive, and information and communication services of all types. But this transformation of the service sector has only just begun, and average

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total compensation of all workers has remained stagnant despite the strong growth in productivity in 1993 and 1994.

In the year 2000 the workers in the typical American business enterprise will have their own keys to the workplace. The most valuable assets of these knowledge-intensive firms—whether in the manufacturing, design, distribution, agriculture, communication, financial, or other sectors—are the workers themselves. The firm's greatest risk is that these highly skilled employees will turn in their keys in the morning and go to work for a competitor, or for themselves. For the individual worker, the *key* to earning the rewards and mobility of such work is a good education—the ability, character, and habit of mind to continuously learn and apply new skills, to work with colleagues to solve problems, meet challenges, and create opportunities. The choice in this new economy is simple: high skills or low wages.

Make no mistake, the challenge set by this new economy is great, but it is surely no greater than the challenges met by our forbearers. Not all of us will adjust to the new economy at the same time or in the same way, and some of us will get lost along the way. But we must make the opportunity to learn and apply new skills and habits of mind realistically available to all Americans.

THE ROLE OF SCHOOLS

If continuous learning is the key to enabling our workers and firms to make their own successful transitions to the new economy, the nature of the challenge to American education must be rethought. Obviously, the challenge is no longer to prepare the majority of citizens for manual labor, whether on the farm, as in 1900, or in the mass production factory, as in 1950. Indeed, it is no longer sufficient just to graduate a majority of youth from high school with basic skills. We hear much today of the decline of elementary, secondary, and higher education. But even with an increasingly diverse student population, by race, color, creed, ethnicity, language, and national origin, the trajectory of accomplishment in schools by most objective measures has generally been *up* in recent years—in graduation rates, in numbers of students taking a tough

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sequence of academic courses, in the proportion of high school graduates going on to college.

The unvarnished truth, however, is that the challenge to American education is now of a much different scale and order of magnitude than it ever has been: virtually *all* students must now learn to new and higher standards. This is a fundamentally new challenge for America's schools.

There is also another challenge: student motivation. One of the continuing ironies of American education is that most colleges and most employers in their admission and hiring decisions do not look behind the high school diploma to the actual performance of the applicant in school. As a result, most students in high school have no incentive to learn to high standards. Students must be given the opportunity to appreciate how learning and work are related. The African proverb is that it takes a whole village to raise a child; for secondary schools, the new proverb is that it takes a whole community to educate our youth.

To understand the extent to which schools must be reinvented to meet these challenges, consider the following caricature of the typical twentieth-century school. This school was organized around a mass production industrial model: Teachers poured prescribed packets of information and doses of discipline into rows of passive students. The students were then sent to the next teacher in the next grade. Teachers were also responsible for sorting out those students who were qualified to be trained for higher education and those students who were not. This school embraced only two technological advances of the twentieth century—the electric bell to keep classes moving, and the public address system so that the principal could communicate the news and orders of the day. Unconscionably, the telephone, fax machine, tape recorder, television, and computer were never integrated into the work of this school.

This caricature does not, of course, describe all of the aspects of the typical twentieth-century school. Whatever the limits of this caricature, however, it is clear that we now live in a much different era, with much different *possibilities* for schools, teachers, and students.

The central feature of a high-performance school is that the primary work of learning is done by the students. Teachers are

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empowered to work together as navigators, tutors, and coaches to enable *all* students to actively engage in learning. The ability to learn is the skill that is most needed in the new economy.

THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

Such a bottom-up transformation in schools cannot be financed or mandated by the national government. Laws, regulations, administrative direction, or judicial orders offer much less support for such change than do wise leadership, seed capital, and incentives for reform. In one sense this continues the limited federal financial role in elementary and secondary education; the federal government provides a small fraction of the financial aid to local schools, concentrated on schools with greater student needs. In another sense, however, this new role marks a substantial departure for the federal government. By large, bipartisan majorities in 1993 and 1994, the Congress enacted and the President signed a set of laws broadening the national interest to include a call upon all schools—and states and localities, parents and firms—to join in the new mission of educating *all* students to new and higher levels.

With respect to each of the basic agreements, the federal government's role is limited but important: leadership and encouragement; evaluation and information; seed capital to nurture bottom-up reform; and supplements where they are needed. Dozens of categorical federal programs have already been consolidated, terminated, or streamlined with substantial federal budget savings, and others will follow, as the focus shifts to enabling all students to learn.

EDUCATING ADULTS

For the 85 percent of the work force for the year 2000 that is already out of high school, there is a complementary challenge for American education: We must expand the opportunity for every person to invest—when, where, and how they choose—in learning new skills.

In the post-Cold War era, when new and better skills are all-important, can there be any doubt that we need to expand opportunities to invest in learning new skills that will enable workers to

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find new and better jobs? We need to put more resources and better information directly in the hands of ordinary Americans so they can choose how best to get ahead in the new economy. Key components of an effective federal strategy to support such lifelong learning opportunities include: Individual Skill Grants and expanded Pell Grants for dislocated workers and low and moderate income persons; Individual Education Accounts with flexible repayment plans so that *every* person can borrow money to invest in learning new skills; tax deductions for tuition, so that the after-tax cost of postsecondary education and training expenses will be rewarded under the tax code as much as such education and training provided or paid for by employers; better information on local, regional, and national labor markets and on education and training providers.

America's greatest comparative economic advantage has always been its ability to adapt to change. In the new economy, where skills, innovation, and personal responsibility will matter even more, it only makes sense to expand the opportunity for individuals to make informed choices about how to get ahead. In the process, we can consolidate dozens of other education and training programs and put the resources directly in the hands of the individual. This expanded federal support for lifelong learning can provide opportunities analogous to what the G. I. Bill offered to America's veterans following World War II.

The opportunity to learn is of vital national interest. It empowers ordinary Americans to build a brighter future for themselves and for their children. The new challenge for American education is to make lifelong learning opportunities available to every person.

The debate about how high education ranks in federal budget priorities will no doubt rage in the Capitol for a few more months. It may be more difficult today than one or two generations ago to appreciate the extent of the national interest in education. Thoughtful voices raise a number of concerns about new conditions that may make it much harder for American education to deliver on its old promise, let alone successfully meet a new and more demanding challenge: There is a larger proportion of voters than ever before with no school-age children and, hence, no direct stake in schools; there is a larger proportion of school-age children than ever before

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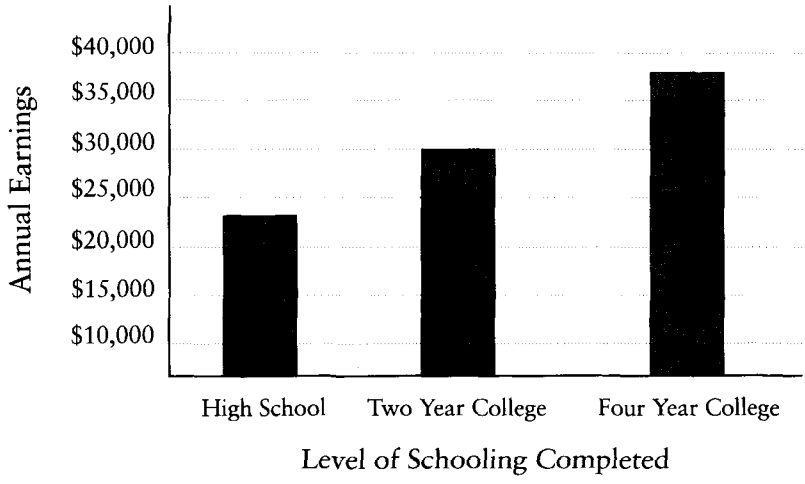
who are of a different race, ethnicity, national origin, or first language than most voters; there is already a larger proportion of students than ever before who graduate from high school and go on to college; parents in many families are working longer hours and have less time for parenting; many parents express general satisfaction with their children's own schools; and the rising constraints on the federal budget and the competing priorities, the breakup of the family, the breakdown of the community, the increasing violence in society, the scourge of drugs, the growing isolation and rage of inner-city youth, and the deepening cynicism of suburban youth make it harder for schools to educate most children to even minimally adequate levels.

Each of these concerns, and many others, may merit serious consideration. As discussion and debate on these issues continue in the years to come, however, we should not lose sight of the basic national consensus on the importance of education. More than ever before, education offers a key to opening the American dream to every American, to unlocking the door to national economic growth and rising family prosperity. More than ever before, education offers a way for families and communities to join together to expand the opportunities for each new generation.

FIGURE 1. Median Earnings of Male Workers in 1993.



Source: Census Bureau, median earnings of males twenty-five years old and older.

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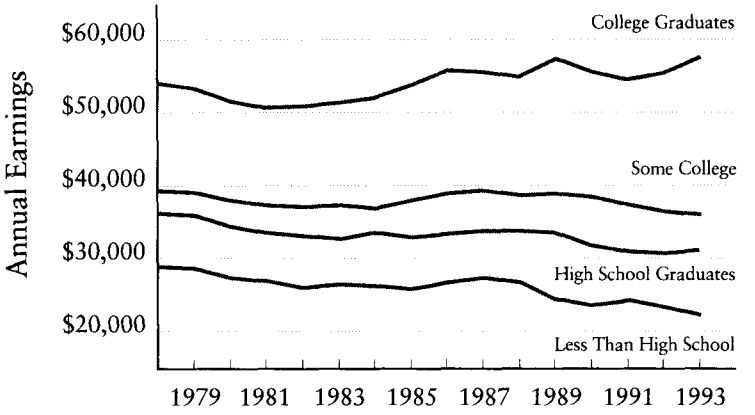
FIGURE 2. Average Annual Earnings of Men by Educational Attainment.

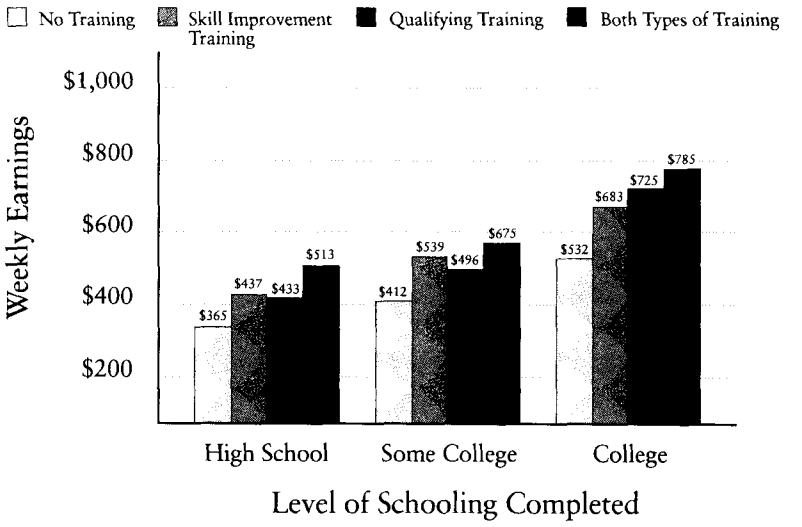


Note: Workers twenty-five years of age and older, working year round, full time. Data on educational attainment for 1991 through 1993 are not directly comparable to that from prior years. Numbers for 1993 used 1990 population weights, whereas data for other years used 1980 population weights.

Source: Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey.

Prepared by OASP, January 18, 1995.

FIGURE 3. Average Weekly Earnings of Full-Time Workers by Educational Attainment and Training Received, 1991.



Source: Current Population Survey.

Prepared by OASP, August 26, 1994.

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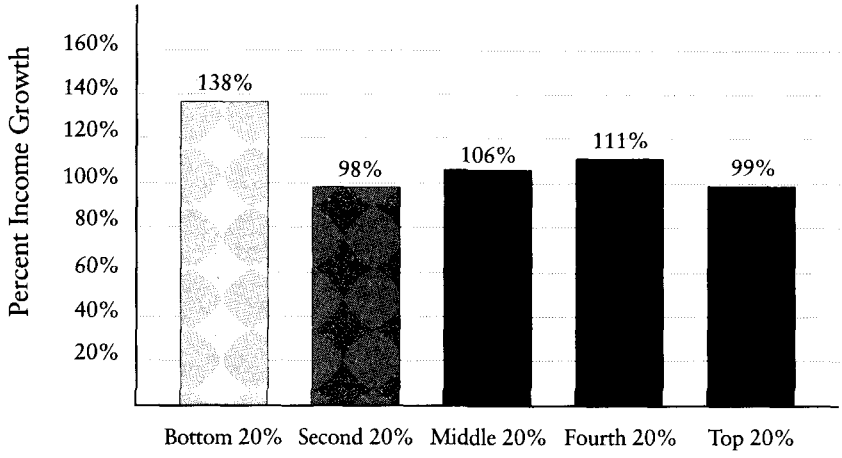
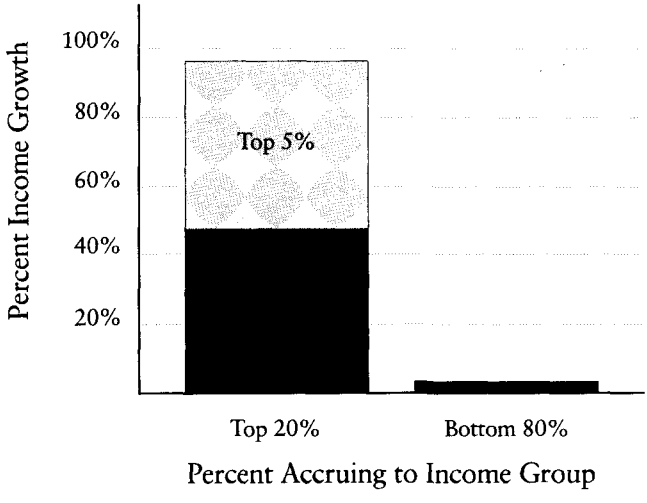
FIGURE 4. Real Family Income Growth by Quintile, 1950 to 1978.



Source: Bureau of the Census, Department of Commerce. All data converted to 1993 dollars.

FIGURE 5. Shares of Average Household Income Growth, 1979 to 1992.



Source: Based on data from the Census Bureau, Current Population Survey. Household income is in constant 1992 dollars, and adjusted by CPI-U-X1, and population is normalized to a constant level.

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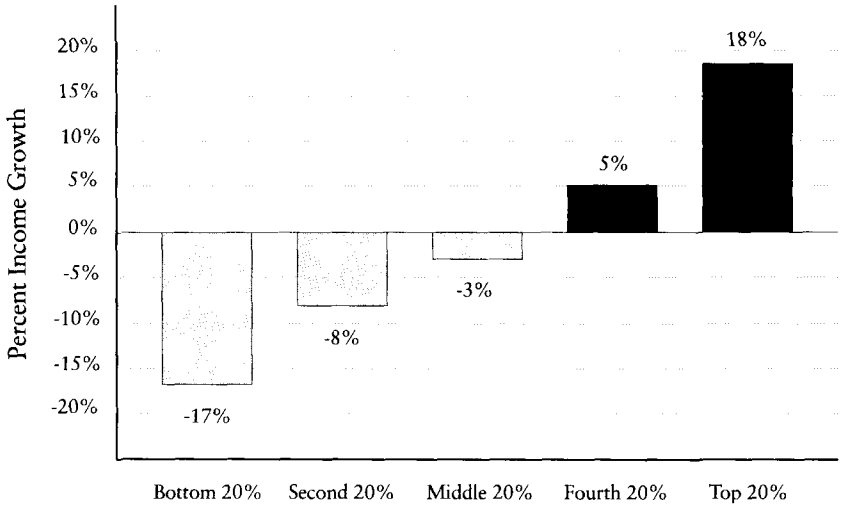
FIGURE 6. Real Family Income Growth by Quintile, 1979 to 1993.



Source: Bureau of the Census, Department of Commerce. All data converted to 1993 dollars.

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Some students after one or more years of college will conclude that their experience of higher educational institutions does not have much interest for them; some teachers will reach the same conclusions about these and other students. It is unreasonable to believe that all who start will finish, even with a lapse of time. Institutions of higher learning ought to lead in helping such students to bypass the social and economic pressures for mandatory attendance. The colleges and universities ought collectively to address themselves to the task of working with employers and trade and professional associations to free many jobs from routine requirements that make college obligatory. Such attendance is often unnecessary for many of the positions for which it is presently required, and ought not to be imposed as a condition for gainful employ. In this, as in so much else, the colleges and universities themselves through their own employment policies should set the pattern for others.

Thesis 7

If access to employment opportunity were less exclusively through college or university education, the pressure to secure admission to such institutions would diminish. New kinds of institutions should be established to appeal to those who are not very much taken with an academic environment; for example, many new kinds of apprenticeship are needed. Every innovation that reduces the pressure on colleges and universities to accommodate all, including those who are not interested or able—and that reinforces an element of choice on the part of the individual—is desirable.

Thesis 8

From "The Assembly on University Goals and Governance"
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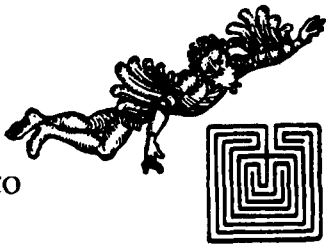

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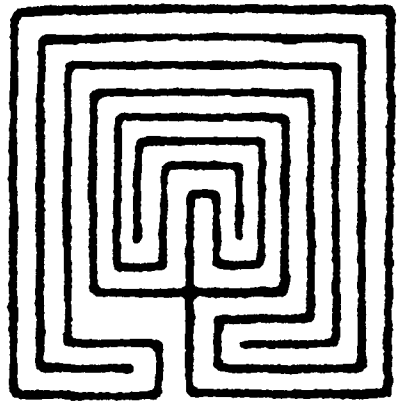

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John F. Jennings

Matching Form and Substance in American Education

"If I had $1,000 to spend on increasing children's achievement in mathematics or science, I'd invest it in Malawi, Mexico, Malaysia, or Morocco—not in Minneapolis or Memphis. From my work on problems of education quality around the world, I've learned I could expect a better return on my investment in developing nations than in the U.S."

—Stephen Heyneman

STEPHEN HEYNEMAN, AN EXPERT IN EDUCATION at the World Bank, based this conclusion on his observations that children in developing countries *want* to go to school and sacrifice a great deal to attend school, while American students do not seem to want to be in school and do not apply themselves. In Heyneman's opinion, therefore, American students are not motivated and do not gain as much from schooling as they could.

In trying to understand this assertion of Heyneman's it might be useful to consider some research conducted by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) on why some students in the United States achieve more in mathematics than do others.

Paul Barton, an ETS researcher, having reviewed, state by state, the results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress, concluded that the differences in math scores between students in

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the various states can mostly be explained by five factors: the number of days a student is absent from school, the number of pages a student reads for homework, the amount of television a student watches, the quantity and type of reading material in the house, and the presence or absence of parents. All of these factors are related to a family's daily activities. Thus, there is a wide range of things a family can do to improve the educational achievement of children. In a way, how a family handles these factors reveals the parents' real beliefs about the value of education.

Putting Barton's conclusions together with Heyneman's would lead one to believe that American students are not studying enough, at least as compared to students in other countries, and that their families bear a good part of the responsibility. Yet, there are some puzzling contradictions found in other reports and surveys.

In a 1990 survey, high school sophomores reported that they were being pressured by their parents, teachers, and guidance counselors to pursue an education beyond high school. Apparently the pressure worked because 60 percent of those sophomores reported that they were planning to go on to a postsecondary institution, as compared to only 49 percent in 1980, according to the US Department of Education. It would seem, then, that high school students understand that they should get further schooling, but at the same time they are not working very hard toward that goal.

Surely this is not the outcome that the school reformers of the 1980s predicted. During that decade the states raised their requirements for students to achieve a high school degree, and as a result more students are taking more courses in the basic subjects. From 1983 to 1992 the number of students fulfilling what the *Nation at Risk* report called the "core curriculum" (four years of English, three years of social studies, three years of science, and three years of math) increased from 13 percent to 47 percent. At the same time, however, grade inflation has occurred. The pressure for improvement affected both students and teachers; teachers understood that more was expected so they graded more leniently. The result is that, after years of school reform, colleges and universities are still complaining that entering students are not prepared for college-level work.

The solutions seem to be easy enough: match form with substance. If institutions of higher education only want students who

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are prepared for college work, they should limit admission to those who have achieved a certain level of education. Of course, since there are so many institutions of postsecondary education, this will mean that in the short run some colleges may have to shut down because they are not admitting enough tuition-paying students to bring in the revenue needed to continue operation. In the long run, though, the motivation of high school students may change; they may learn that they have to work harder in secondary school if they want to go on to higher education.

Alternatively, school districts could simply require that to graduate students must have mastered the materials that a twelfth-grader should know. To assist those who are not interested in obtaining a high school diploma, states could change their school attendance laws so that students can leave school after tenth grade to get a job or to pursue job training. Hopefully, after some experience in the job market, they will want to seek additional schooling.

Such changes as those outlined above would cause a radical restructuring of American education. Several states have tried to move in this direction and have experienced significant problems, not the least of which has been dealing with the parents of those students who do not meet the new requirements.

If this type of change is too radical for most states and institutions of higher education to undertake, then a second path is available: states can adopt higher standards for their elementary and secondary schools and implement these standards over time. The benefit would be that students and parents would know, in advance, what level of achievement is required in order to graduate high school and to enter college. Almost every state is now developing standards for educational content and for student performance, and the federal government, through the Goals 2000 program, is providing some assistance. Once such standards are implemented, then other reforms must necessarily occur, such as better teacher preparation and improved textbooks. Standards development is just the beginning of the process, but it is an essential first step if American education is to match form with substance.

We as a country must have the tenacity to stick with this task for as long as it takes. The job will be complete when students recognize that it is not only more years of schooling that is needed but, more importantly, the mastery of more educational content.

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Students ought to be permitted to intermingle study and work in ways that are now uncommon. This is not simply a plea for an extension of what now passes for cooperative work and study programs, where the student spends one or more terms away from a college campus. Rather, it is an assertion that significant employment opportunities for students may be provided in term-time if the university recognizes the value of such experience and is prepared to admit its educational importance. New counseling and instructional techniques will be needed for such educational combinations. Without close supervision, programs of this kind could easily become peripheral—a kind of extracurricular "make-work."

Thesis 13

Many students opt for advanced graduate and professional study not out of great interest but almost in a spirit of resignation. The universities would be well advised to adopt a more critical stance in respect to their advanced degrees, recognizing that they are not necessary to all professional employ. They ought more regularly to initiate shorter graduate programs, which may or may not lead to degrees. They ought systematically to encourage employers and professional associations to accept such preparation.

Thesis 15

From "The Assembly on University Goals and Governance"
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Sharon P. Robinson

Life, Literacy, and the Pursuit of Challenges

"Children learn for the same reason that birds fly. They are learning machines. If your child is having problems in school, the question you should be asking yourself is: What's turning off this learning machine?"

—Edward Zigler
Professor of Child Psychology, Yale University

THE TYRANNY OF LOW EXPECTATIONS

DR. ZIGLER'S QUESTION GOES TO THE HEART of the most urgent and fundamental problem confronting our nation's K-12 schools. "What's turning off" so many students—what is impeding the performance of these "learning machines"—is *the tyranny of low expectations.* Abundant evidence now refutes the assumption that large segments of America's student population (e.g., blacks, Hispanics, students with limited English proficiency, the disabled, and students attending inner-city schools) lack the capacity to master complex material, meet lofty goals, or excel in schools that offer rich curricula and competent instruction.[1]

The number of reformers, researchers, practitioners, and policymakers who find this evidence persuasive continues to grow. But old habits and stale ideas are resilient, and, in far too many instances, they continue to determine opinion and govern policy.

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These habits and ideas rest on a rickety foundation composed of assumptions derived from the educational needs of the industrial age, biases that are the residue of the initial opposition to the 1954 *Brown* v. *Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* decision, and regressive thought that denies the imperative for a re-definition of the skills today's students must master. Whether we, as a people, are prepared to jettison these habits and to embrace the principle that no child is dispensable and all students can learn is among the most compelling and urgent issues confronting our nation.

We need a new national consensus. We know that when we rid ourselves of bias about *who* can learn, *all* learn; when we challenge all students, all respond; the more we expect of students, the more they produce.

In October 1994, for example, the National Center for Education Statistics issued a report entitled *Effective Schools in Mathematics* that concluded that high-level course taking in mathematics was a critical element in school effectiveness regardless of the socioeconomic status of the students. In the eighth grade, average student achievement rose as the percentage of students who planned to take geometry in ninth grade increased. In twelfth grade, averages were higher in schools where a higher percentage of students had taken algebra in or before ninth grade. Taking more advanced mathematics courses—trigonometry, calculus, statistics—also contributed to higher average mathematics proficiency.

This trend was particularly apparent among minority and female students. Black participation in Algebra II, for example, rose from 28 percent in 1978 to 38 percent in 1992, while female participation increased from 37 to 47 percent during those years (see *Table 1*). Despite, or, more precisely, because of, exposure to more demanding material, black proficiency increased and female proficiency showed only a statistically insignificant decline.

Effective Schools in Mathematics further concluded that students' participation in more advanced mathematics courses was the single most powerful predictor of higher mathematics achievement at grade twelve. The report also identified access to advanced coursework at earlier stages (e.g., algebra and calculus in grade eight) as critical to student mathematics achievement.

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TABLE 1. Trends in Highest Level of Mathematics Course Taken at Age Seventeen, 1978 to 1992.

	Nation	White	Black	Hispanic	Male	Female
Prealgebra or General Mathematics						
1992: Percent	14(1.1)	12(1.0)	15(2.7)	25(4.7)	14(1.3)	13(1.0)
Proficiency	271(1.6)	276(1.7)	256(4.8)	269(3.1)	275(2.3)	267(1.6)
1978: Percent	20(1.0)*	18(1.1)*	31(1.3)*	36(3.1)	21(1.0)*	20(1.1)*
Proficiency	267(0.8)*	272(0.6)	247(1.6)	256(2.3)*	269(1.0)	264(0.9)
Algebra I						
1992: Percent	14(0.8)	12(0.8)	19(2.6)	18(2.2)	16(1.0)	12(1.1)
Proficiency	289(1.1)	293(1.0)	279(3.4)	285(3.1)	291(1.7)	287(1.8)
1978: Percent	17(0.6)*	17(0.6)*	19(1.2)	19(2.1)	15(0.6)	18(0.7)*
Proficiency	286(0.7)	291(0.6)	264(1.5)*	273(2.8)*	289(0.9)	284(1.0)
Geometry						
1992: Percent	16(0.9)	16(1.0)	18(2.3)	18(2.5)	16(1.1)	17(1.1)
Proficiency	302(1.6)	306(1.6)	283(3.4)	297(3.9)	306(2.0)	297(2.0)
1978: Percent	16(0.6)	17(0.7)	11(0.8)*	12(1.2)	15(0.5)	18(0.8)
Proficiency	307(0.7)*	310(0.6)	281(1.9)	294(4.4)	310(1.0)	304(0.8)*
Algebra II						
1992: Percent	45(1.6)	47(1.7)	38(3.8)	33(5.8)	42(2.0)	47(1.5)
Proficiency	320(0.7)	323(0.9)	301(2.2)	312(2.0)	323(1.1)	317(1.0)
1978: Percent	37(1.2)*	39(1.3)*	28(2.1)	23(2.5)	38(1.2)	37(1.3)*
Proficiency	321(0.7)	325(0.6)	292(1.4)*	303(2.9)*	325(0.8)	318(0.9)
Precalculus or Calculus						
1992: Percent	10(0.8)	10(1.0)	7(1.9)	4(0.9)	10(1.0)	9(0.9)
Proficiency	343(1.7)	347(1.6)	313(5.7)	320(7.3)	344(2.7)	341(2.0)
1978: Percent	6(0.4)*	6(0.4)*	4(0.6)	3(0.9)	7(0.5)*	4(0.4)*
Proficiency	334(1.4)*	338(1.1)*	297(6.5)	306(6.1)	337(2.0)	329(1.8)*

*Statistically significant difference from 1992, where alpha equals 0.05 per set of comparisons. The standard errors of the estimated percentages and proficiencies appear in parentheses. It can be said with 95 percent certainty that for each population of interest, the value for the whole population is within plus or minus two standard errors of the estimate for the sample. In comparing two estimates, one must use the standard error of the difference. Percentages of students may not total 100 percent because a small percentage of students reported having taken other mathematics courses.

Source: National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1992 Mathematics Trend Assessment.

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The Algebra Initiative Colloquium, sponsored by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), reached conclusions consistent with those presented in *Effective Schools in Mathematics*. Colloquium participants referred to algebra as the "academic passport for entry into virtually every avenue of the job market and every street of schooling."[2] Moreover, the participants reissued the charge that tracking and the "layer cake" organization of current mathematics curricula block opportunities to learn mathematics.[3]

It is for these reasons that the Algebra Working Group of the OERI-funded National Center for Research in Mathematical Sciences Education is working on a plan to facilitate the integration of algebra throughout the K-8 curriculum, much as is done abroad. The goal is to ensure that *all* students will have learned the equivalent of Algebra I by the time they complete the eighth grade.

This initiative signals a commitment to the principle that all children can achieve to high standards if they are challenged. The inference that can be drawn from the research establishing a tight link between student performance and rigorous standards is that academic excellence demands a new kind of equity—the equity of expectations or, differently expressed, an equal opportunity to be challenged. Unless we accept the obligation to provide *every* student the opportunity to try and to learn the value of struggle, we mock the ideal of equality.

Education in America has long been infected by a covert form of elitism. For far too many students the curriculum has become an educational ghetto. These students have been denied the opportunity to succeed because they have been denied the opportunity to be challenged. The tyranny of low expectations enslaves the mind and imprisons potential.[4]

This is not the route to the "learning society" that America must become if we are to retain our economic *and ethical* preeminence within the world community. Clearly we must change direction. We must integrate curricular content, instructional methodology, and achievement standards into a coherent, research-based strategy to produce students who have mastered significantly more difficult curricular material.

A top-down approach will not achieve this objective. Rather, the changes will happen school by school, district by district, state

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by state. The responsibility—and the privilege—of reinventing our schools rests with local communities. Only if they insist on rigorous standards for *all* can we become a nation no longer scarred by deep divisions between the privileged and the deprived. And only then, with more citizens equipped to contribute to the common good, will we become a nation prepared for the competitive challenges ahead.

ASSESSMENT AS ADVOCACY

Elevating standards will not, in and of itself, solve the most pressing problems confronting America's schools. The shift to curricula that are driven by rigorous standards, if undertaken in the absence of comprehensive changes in modes of assessing student achievement, will derail the drive toward *equity*. Conversely, improvements in assessment methodology, if made in the absence of a firm commitment to standards-driven reform, will derail the drive toward *excellence*. The elevation of standards and the improvement of assessment must be tightly coordinated initiatives.

The reason is not complex: assessment is not an end in itself, but a means of enhancing student achievement. When used properly, assessment is an advocacy process.[5] It serves students and teachers by being a barometer of progress. Teachers should be able to rely on assessment to expedite the diagnosis of impediments to learning. And students should be able to rely on assessment, in the words of W. Edwards Demming, to "drive out fear" and bolster their confidence to tackle further learning challenges.

This requirement is violated by most current tests of student achievement. These tools, with few exceptions, measure neither the depth nor the breadth of the students' understanding and skill. In fact, at present, assessment practices perpetuate the tyranny of low expectations.

We still have a long journey before us, but a strong demand for new assessment is evolving. If we are to recognize and respect the splendid variety of learning styles among our nation's over forty million K-12 students, we must meet this demand.

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THE SOCIOECONOMIC MATRIX

The elevation of standards for all students and the development of more authentic modes of assessment are necessary conditions for improved schooling and improved student achievement. They are not, however, sufficient conditions. This fact was given prominence by *In the National Interest: The Federal Government in the Reform of K-12 Math and Science Education,* a report issued by the Carnegie Commission on Science, Technology, and Government in 1991:

> For the most rapidly growing segment of the children in our land—the poor and other disadvantaged children—public schools and the other social institutions on which they depend are failing to reverse a downward spiral that threatens to relegate the majority of these children to a lifetime of second-class citizenship. In the year 2000. . .one American child in four will be poor; one child in three will be a member of a minority group; and one child in twelve will not be sufficiently proficient in English to learn without special assistance. The state of American education is therefore a reflection—indeed a victim—of the nation's social condition. With many children facing inadequate educational stimulation and even basic nutrition at home, current financial, political, and institutional arrangements do not offer a means of escape from the spiral of despair. School reform alone will not suffice.[6]

The classroom is not an oasis. Student achievement depends, for example, on tough, unrelenting enforcement of civil rights statutes, on access to quality health care, and on the funding of Title I, Head Start, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, and the school lunch program. Furthermore, the academic achievement of our *future* students is dependent on the quality of prenatal health care.

Even this abbreviated litany of conditions that impact student achievement makes it plain that we need new strategies for the delivery of services that protect and heal America's young people. The programs that serve the needs of our young people cannot exist in isolation from one another. We need to be more holistic in our thinking. We must establish a knowledge base that defines the best approaches to integrated, coordinated, school-linked services. We cannot expect students to meet exacting standards while they

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live within a social context that offers substandard support for their physical, intellectual, and social development.

The movement toward school-based coordinated services remains in its nascent stages. But this much is already certain, we cannot permit comprehensive school change to be compromised by a narrow vision of the prerequisites for academic success. We must accelerate progression toward the day when school reform is the product of community alliances, guided by the joint efforts of researchers, practitioners, parents, health-care professionals, policymakers, and others who understand that investment in our children today is an investment in the America of tomorrow.

CONCLUSION

If the students in our classrooms today are to be prepared for the challenges of tomorrow, all must become literate and numerate in the maximalist sense. The achievement of this goal demands a multi-dimensional effort rooted in the understanding that our schools are not discrete entities, but part of a world that is tightly intertwined and deeply interdependent. It follows that the effort to stimulate lasting, substantive reform immerses us in social, political, instructional, and psychometric issues.

We must not underestimate our students; they will succeed if challenged. We must not burden our students with assessments that frustrate rather than facilitate learning; they will treasure tests that pave the path to self-improvement. Finally, we must not forget that the world our students inhabit extends far beyond the classroom; they will perform better in school when we perform better as architects of a safe, just, and compassionate social order.

ENDNOTES

[1]Kate McGilly, ed., *Classroom Lessons* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994), and Barbara Means, Carol Chelmer, and Michael S. Knapp, eds., *Teaching Advanced Skills to At-Risk Students: Views from Research and Practice* (San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass, 1991).

[2]C. B. Lacampagne, Walter Blair, and James Kaput, eds., *The Algebra Initiative Colloquium: Proceedings from a Conference on Reform in Algebra, December*

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9–12, 1993, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: US Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1995).

[3]Bob Moses in Ibid. Cf. Stephen J. Fitzsimmons and Larry C. Kerpelman, eds., *Teacher Enhancement for Elementary and Secondary Science and Mathematics: Status, Issues, and Problems* (Cambridge, Mass.: Center for Science and Technology Studies, prepared by Abt Associates, Inc. for the National Science Foundation, 1994).

[4]"To neglect the science education of *any* (as has too often happened to girls and minority students) is to deprive them of a basic education, handicap them for life, and deprive the nation of talented workers and informed citizens—a loss the nation can ill afford." American Association for the Advancement of Science, *Science for All Americans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 214. Cf. Quality Education for Minorities Project, *Education That Works: An Action Plan for the Education of Minorities* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990), passim; and the National Research Council, *Everybody Counts: A Report to the Nation on the Future of Mathematics Education* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1989), passim.

[5]See Jim Cummins, "Empowering Minority Students: A Framework for Intervention," *Harvard Educational Review* 56 (1) (February 1986): 18–36. "Historically, assessment has played the role of legitimizing the disabling of minority students." Ibid., 29. Cf. Hugh Mehan, Alma Hertweck, and J. Lee Meihls, *Handicapping the Handicapped: Decision Making in Students' Educational Careers* (Palo Alto, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1986).

[6]Carnegie Commission on Science, Technology, and Government, *In the National Interest: The Federal Government in the Reform of K-12 Math and Science Education* (New York: Carnegie Commission on Science, Technology, and Government, 1991).

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R. M. Latanision

Education Reform and the Public Will

AN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM SHOULD, I BELIEVE, serve our children in at least two important ways: it should provide the means for each child to reach his or her intellectual potential and it should prepare young people to take a place in an increasingly technologically advanced society. The implication is that our children should be prepared by our educational system to enter the work force. In addition, of course, we have a responsibility to prepare our children to exercise their rights as citizens in a democratic society. Sadly, our educational system is failing in both respects: our children are not reaching their intellectual potential, and, as employers in both manufacturing and service sectors testify, there is a growing gap between the skills of young people and the demands of the workplace. This gap is particularly prominent, although not exclusively so, among those in the educational system who are not college bound. This should not be too surprising considering that we spend a disproportionate share of our intellectual and fiscal resources on college bound students. Such investments are not all bad, since innovation and job creation are often associated with the products of our system of higher education. It is, however, not all good either, since non-college bound children are falling further behind.

The system that I believe is failing, however, consists of more than the schools, the students, and the teachers. We are all part of that system, whether we are parents, teachers, students, journalists, industrialists, salesmen, or legislators, etc. The educational

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system that I am addressing is sensitive to a multiplicity of social, economic, and political forces that affect its function.

It is, perhaps, an indication of my instincts as an engineer that I suggest that we perform a root cause analysis of the failure of our educational system. If an engineering system fails, one must determine why it failed before remedial action can or should be undertaken. If an engine on an airliner fails, one must determine whether the root cause of the failure was a defect in the turbine disks or that a flock of birds was ingested during flight, for example, before planning a response. I believe that a similar analysis would be useful in dealing with the failure of our educational system. It seems to me that there is a great capacity at present for proposing solutions, but with little basis in a diagnostic sense.

It is ironic that the broad, systemic character of education may be simultaneously a source of strength and a source of weakness in terms of change. It is a source of strength in that we all have a stake in its success; education is intimately associated with the social, economic, and political fabric of the nation. It is a weakness in that the multiplicity of views on what in the system needs attention is staggering. The symmetry between school reform and health-care reform in the United States is intriguing. Intense discussion of health-care reform occurred last year, however unsuccessful it was, not because the Congress got religious about health care, but because the cost of health care is consuming a large fraction of the federal budget and is adding disproportionately to the deficit. The lack of action is a reflection of the multiplicity of conflicting views: we have become a nation of special interests at the expense of the common good. The same may be said of education reform. Worse yet, those who are most immediately affected by our educational system are the least able to change it.

The symptoms of a malfunctioning system are clear: the nationwide high school dropout rate is about 20 percent, approaching 40 to 50 percent in urban population centers. Fifteen percent of those who graduate from our high schools each year are functionally illiterate. American industry spends tens of billions of dollars each year in training programs, much of it on remedial programs. In terms of science and technology education, only about 20 percent of our high school students will ever take a chemistry course, and roughly 10 percent will study physics. The retention rates in uni-

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versity science and engineering courses are declining. The litany of such statistics goes on and on. A 1990 report of the Commission on the Skills of the American Work Force, chaired by Ira Magaziner, concluded that by the year 2000, 70 percent of the jobs in America will not require a college education. That may not appear to be much of a problem, since only about one-third of the children leaving high school now go on to college anyway. The tragedy is that the majority of our non-college bound youth, many of whom have dropped out of high school, will not have the skills required to enter the work force. This is not only true of those who are about to leave the K-12 system, but also of those who left the system earlier as well as the significant fraction who do not complete college. A double tragedy is that vocational education and industrial arts (or technology education in some quarters), which are capable of reaching that large non-college bound population, are considered by the public as second-class experiences for second-class students. In a sense, this becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. There is no reason, in my view, why a skills-oriented K-12 education could not lead youngsters to college, and there are wonderful examples where this is true. It is just not true often enough. We must find a way to reduce the stigma attached to vocational education. It seems to me that the research universities in the United States may be the key to this change in mind-set; such institutions (MIT among them) are in some respects super vocational-technical schools that offer core curricula in math, science, and the humanities and that then focus students on specific, often technological, disciplines and skills. A good vocational or skills-based education for non-college bound students could follow this model. If the research universities were to take on such educational statesmanship, vocational education could, rightfully, prosper in the United States.

Given the above symptoms, what is the root cause? Are our standards too low? (Do we need alternative methods of assessing achievement?) Is our school day/year too short? Are our educational materials inferior? Is the curriculum out-of-date or out of touch? Are teachers underprepared? Is it the management of the schools that is failing? My sense is that all of these questions and others merit consideration, but I think they are all secondary to

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something that is far more personal, namely, attitudes, both individually and collectively.

I do not think that people can be made to learn if they are not inclined or motivated to do so. What are some of the attitudinal issues that should be of concern? First, consider students. When children in educationally rich environments find it "not cool to be smart" they choose to underachieve. It has never been fashionable to be a "nerd," so this is not a particularly new issue. Such social pressure is particularly a problem for young women and minorities who, incidentally, will represent the largest groups entering the work force at the turn of the century, given the decline in the population of young, white males. At the other end of the economic spectrum are children in despair, who choose not to work hard at learning because they feel that they will never have the economic means to go on to higher education and do not associate public respect with skills-oriented education. Tragically, youngsters across the economic spectrum are underachieving academically because of social pressures, whether real or perceived. In this respect, achievement is, by and large, not central to the culture of our young in the United States. (There are, of course, exceptions to this generalization in many "new" American families who are living the American dream that characterized immigrant populations of earlier generations in the United States.) It is important to celebrate academic achievement just as we celebrate achievement in athletics. There are wonderful examples of communities that have begun to do this. One of the very best is the annual Celebration of Academic All-Stars that is sponsored by Cape Cod Publishing Company.

Second, as I was told recently by a youngster, "parents also have attitudes." How ironic it is that parents often consider teachers to be the underachievers in our society, who, if they could, would do something else. Yet, these underachievers are charged with the education of our children. This has become another self-fulfilling prophecy in the United States. Today many young people who have inclinations towards teaching recognize that teaching is just not a respected profession. Moreover, they do have choices and, unless they are remarkably dedicated, they will choose to go into a profession where they are more respected and where they can earn a more respectable income. We need to encourage our best

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and brightest to teach. The recent evolution of an undergraduate teacher certification program at MIT is representative of such overt encouragement.

Finally, consider our communities. In his 1992 "Economic Call to Arms," former US Senator and then presidential candidate Paul Tsongas expressed the view that public schools should become the "meeting house of our society" and that political leaders, including the President or "Principal-in-Chief," must by their personal actions bring this about. I support this view, but I believe that the political will and the public will must coincide if the school system is to function as the heart of the community. For example, a system that derives revenue for its operation from the real estate tax base guarantees inequities. Money is not everything, of course, but there is no way that a community that spends $12,000 per student annually and one that spends $2,000 per student annually will provide the same educational environment. Many states are responding to this issue by abandoning the real estate tax base (i.e., Michigan) or by adopting state-wide foundation-level support for every community (i.e., Massachusetts). But this demonstration of political will must be accompanied by the political courage to follow through. Likewise, the public must understand that everyone has a stake in the success of the school system, whether they have children in school or not. In Massachusetts, Proposition 2½ caps the real estate tax, but towns have the option of an override if the voters agree. In a now infamous election in one community, an override vote for a ballot item on trash collection passed while an override for the school system failed to pass. It may be a bit unfair to say that the attitude of the voters was that everyone has trash, but not everyone has kids in school, but not by much.

Unless the means can be found to change the way people think about education, I do not believe that new standards, curriculum changes, longer days, vouchers, etc., will be terribly meaningful. And we must deal not only with college bound youngsters, but also with those who are not, and the millions of underskilled adults who have long since left the K-12 system. President Clinton's School-to-Work Opportunities Act focuses on the latter issue, but its implementation is at an early and evolutionary stage. Programmatics aside, an important challenge will be to make

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vocational or skill-based education respectable in the United States. My view is that education reform in the broadest sense is now at a stage—thanks to efforts such as the systemic initiatives at the National Science Foundation—where many of the tools that are required for reform are becoming available in forms that can be used in our K-12 schools, in preparing new teachers, and in developing the capacities of in-service teachers, etc. But in order to implement reform, we must begin in earnest to engage the American public. Without public support and approval, the reform movement may meet insurmountable resistance from a public that is skeptical of change and also of teachers and politicians. Nevertheless, history suggests that public opinion and the public will can be managed constructively, but this requires skills that are atypical of the educational community. Most educators and scholars would be repulsed by the notion that public relations and advertising expertise are now required to move education reform forward, but I believe this to be the case. The large scale social engineering project that is represented by the reform of the educational system requires the same kind of national commitment that emerges during periods of real or perceived national emergency. Such urgency, however, is not characteristic of a process that requires twelve or more years to complete. The issue can be made compelling, if not urgent, to a public that is concerned about the well-being of its younger generations. And, truly, that is the issue—the education of our children. The challenge is daunting, but I believe it is at the root of the need for education reform in the United States.

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John D'Auria

Tremors We Should Not Ignore

THE MIDDLE SCHOOL AT WHICH I AM THE PRINCIPAL is located in an affluent Boston suburb. It is a school that has strong support from parents, dedicated and skillful teachers, and abundant community resources. Student test scores are high, and about 90 percent of the students go on to very good colleges. Despite these advantages, however, the faculty has a desperate sense that they are losing ground.

Teachers are finding it difficult to keep up with the changing demands of their job. The primary source of their difficulty is the widespread perception that the foundation upon which a good education rests is dramatically shifting. Parents and teachers are no longer connected by a common set of expectations for learning. The three 'R's, while perhaps outdated, have not been replaced by a new set of universally accepted learning goals. To confuse matters even more, routines and schedules of home life have radically changed in recent years. The hectic pace of family life leaves little time for schoolwork.

Teachers are spending precious class time asking students to do rudimentary things: "Please take your seats; I would like to begin class." Eventually, the students settle into their seats. However, their minds are often elsewhere. The next day is not much different: their homework is missing; their notebooks are at home; they did not bring anything with which to write. The teacher has four or five students like this in each of her classes.

Four teachers who work with the same cluster of students meet regularly to discuss their most worrisome students. This team of

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teachers has experimented with a range of strategies to help those students who are not meeting with success: they provide more choice, structure extra help sessions after school, and implement monitoring systems that provide frequent feedback to students and parents. Special educators have administered assessments to rule out learning disabilities. For one student, they count three parent conferences, eight phone calls home, twenty-five after-school sessions with the student, fifteen days of absence from school—five of which were for a sports tournament scheduled during school days—and ten weekly progress reports recounting the child's progress and listing missing assignments sent by facsimile to the parent's workplace. Punishments, such as detention, have proved ineffective. A total of three hundred extra hours has gone into supporting these students' learning. Yet for all that time and effort, student motivation and performance continue to be unsatisfactory.

The problem students represent about one-sixth of the total number of students for which our teachers are responsible. Are the other students being shortchanged? Teachers worry that they are, and so do parents. Teachers believe that the solution must begin at home. If parents were more willing and able to supervise their children, establish consistent homework and bedtime routines, take an interest in their child's schoolwork, and hold their children accountable when they do not do their part, then their children would achieve more success in school.

However, family life is often hectic. Weeknights and weekends are filled to the brim with lessons, practices, games, etc. Diminished interchanges between parent and child leave few opportunities for children to untangle the confusion of their day or for parents to acknowledge the growth that happens in small steps—too small to be acknowledged by people traveling at a fast pace.

Teachers point out a connection between the rise in the number of children who are overwhelmed by their responsibilities and a general increase in cheating and cynicism. They also worry about the growing number of students who come to school tired. Homework, dinner, and time for winding down often are sacrificed to extracurricular activities. One teacher recently commented, "I hear too many stories of children eating dinner at a fast food drive-through in between games and then staying up until midnight to finish a school project. That cannot be in their best interest."

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A major fault line exists in our country's educational foundation. Parents want improved schools; teachers want parents to be accountable for sufficient supervision, monitoring, and support for their children's school endeavors. Arriving at mutually agreeable educational goals requires a coordination between home and school that is currently not happening. We need a forum and a process whereby we can arrive at answers to the question, "What do we want for our children?" Once we answer that question with clarity and specificity, we will know better what we want from our schools.

The lack of a clear mission dilutes our scarce resources and fragments our work. Parents and teachers need to define what learning goals and values will receive systematic attention and what responsibilities parents and schools will take to achieve these outcomes.

We must also reevaluate our estimate of how complex it is to develop a child into a contributing member of society in the 1990s. Our current assessment, based on an outdated representation of family life, neighborhood, and adult influence, is providing too few resources, not enough resolve, and insufficient planning for the task before us. We need to link our quest to improve what is ailing our society in general to education, not to punishment (i.e., building more prisons). However, we live in a society where many believe that educating a child is a simple task. From that belief flows two assumptions: *1)* that teaching is easy; *2)* that parenting does not require any significant time investment or special skills. It may involve tedious and time-consuming activities, but the common perception is that educating children does not require much brainpower because it is neither complex nor related to any clearly defined set of skills. Consequently, we do not view parenting as something that one needs to learn how to do, nor teaching as something that is associated with a knowledge base.

I cannot imagine anything more complex than the development of a human being. Although nature does take care of physical development, the mind, heart, and soul are in need of guidance, direction, delicate nurturing, and care. Such guidance requires time, skillful coaching, frequent reflection, and knowledge of the special needs at each stage of development. Caring and knowledgeable adults must be available to children. We must make a

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collective commitment to invest time in our children's lives, money in our children's schools, and our most talented and caring people into education.

Current school reform talk focuses on standards, assessments, and outcomes. We also hear a great deal about the potential that computers and other forms of technology hold for improving learning. However, the faculty in my school is deeply worried that in the quest to implement reforms the other factors that provide the foundation for our work will continue to be ignored.

Teachers, child-care workers, and social service providers are the seismographs of our nation. They feel the tremors a little earlier than others. Despite the damage that has already beset our cities, we continue to ignore further warning signs: a sizable and growing minority of our children are leaving school not sufficiently equipped with the inner discipline and confidence necessary to be creative and contributing members of our society. It is a challenge to reflect on these conditions and not blame students, parents, or schools. The faculty in my school is committed to addressing these issues in a responsible way. However, our discussions on how best to do this lead us to wonder how much we can take this on and still meet an increasing array of academic expectations and standards.

As we rebuild our schools, let us not forget that the village that will help our children flourish also needs to be reconstructed. Each member of the school community—faculty, administrators, and parents—must create a shared vision of what we want for our children. That vision must not only contain goals for learning, but also the responsibilities we each must accept for developing our children into successful, productive adults.

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Linda Darling-Hammond

Restructuring Schools for Student Success

TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN AMERICAN EDUCATION, we must rethink how schools are designed, how teaching and learning are pursued, and how resources are allocated. If we want schools not merely to "deliver instruction" but to ensure that all students learn in more powerful and effective ways, we must create schools that are sufficiently personalized to know their students well, that are managed and staffed by teachers who are professionally prepared and supported, and that are funded equitably in ways that invest in the front lines of teaching and learning. This three-part agenda requires a paradigm shift in how we think about the management and purpose of schools: from hierarchical, factory model institutions where teachers, treated as semi-skilled assembly line workers, process students for their slots in society, to professional communities where student success is supported by the collaborative efforts of knowledgeable teachers who are organized to address the needs of diverse learners.

Today's schools were designed when the goal of education was not to educate all students well but to process a great many efficiently, selecting and supporting only a few for "thinking work." Strategies for sorting and tracking students were developed to ration the scarce resources of expert teachers and rich curricula, and to standardize teaching tasks and procedures within groups. This, in turn, enabled greater routinization of teaching work, and less reliance on professional skill and judgment, a corollary of the nineteenth-century decision to structure teaching as semi-skilled labor.

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The goal was to instill in the masses of students the rudimentary skills and the basic workplace socialization needed to follow orders and conduct predetermined tasks neatly and punctually. As recent national and international research on US education has demonstrated, the rote learning needed for these early twentieth-century objectives still predominates in today's schools, reinforced by top-down prescriptions for teaching practice, mandated curriculum packages, standardized tests that focus on low-level cognitive skills, and continuing underinvestment in teacher education that would enable more ambitious teaching.[1]

The school structure created to implement this conception of teaching and learning is explicitly impersonal, a function of both its size and organization. Students move from one teacher to the next, from grade to grade, and from class period to class period, with little opportunity to become well known to any adults who can consider them as whole people or as developing intellects. Secondary school teachers may see 150 or more students a day. Teachers work in isolation from one another, stamping students with lessons. Students, too, tend to work alone and passively, listening to lectures, memorizing facts and algorithms, and engaging in independent work at their separate desks.[2]

In urban areas, schools are huge warehouses, with three thousand or more students. They are focused substantially on the control of behavior rather than the development of community. With a locker as their only stable point of contact, a schedule that cycles them through a series of seven to ten overloaded teachers, and a counselor who struggles to serve the "personal" needs of several hundred students, teenagers have little to connect to. Most students are likely to experience such high schools, heavily stratified within and substantially dehumanized throughout, as noncaring or even adversarial environments where "getting over" becomes important when "getting known" is impossible. For adults, the capacity to be accountable for the learning of students is reduced by the departmentalized structure that gives them little control over or connection to most of what happens to the students they see only briefly.

It is becoming increasingly clear that the task of educating very diverse learners to much higher standards of learning in a world with rapidly changing educational demands will require more skillful

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teaching and more responsive schools than current educational bureaucracies allow. New school organizations—like the new organizations that are being created to replace ossified bureaucracies in business and industry—will need to rely on much greater knowledge, skill, and judgment on the part of all "front line" workers (teachers), along with flexible planning and problem-solving more responsive to the needs of students and the realities of change.

Just as many businesses have been flattening hierarchies, decentralizing decision-making, and placing more responsibility in the hands of front line work teams, schools have been restructuring to reduce the overspecialization and bureaucratization that have proved increasingly problematic. These changes are increasing schools' capacities to connect with families and to succeed with students.[3] As reforms in business and education mature, striking parallels emerge between the organizational strategies of "high performance, high involvement" corporations and those of extraordinarily successful schools. Such schools feature smaller, more personalized, and less fragmented structures with less departmentalization, stronger relational bonds between and among students and teachers, greater use of teaching teams, and substantial teacher participation in school redesign and decision-making.[4] Teacher collaboration in these settings promotes knowledge sharing and communication that focuses "a faculty's collective technical expertise on specific problems within the school."[5]

Small size is one important factor. A substantial body of research shows that, all else equal, smaller schools and school units (in the range of three hundred to five hundred students) are associated with higher achievement,[6] as well as better attendance rates,[7] fewer dropouts,[8] and lower levels of student misbehavior.[9] They are more effective in allowing students to become bonded to important adults in a learning community, who can play the role that families and communities find it harder and harder to play. They are also more effective in creating good interpersonal relationships, and in providing opportunities for students to participate in extracurricular activities and to take leadership roles.[10]

Size is not the only factor at work here, however. The most effective schools or school units are those that create structures for caring—forms of organization that enable close, sustained relationships among students and teachers—rather than structures

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determined by bureaucratic divisions of labor. Structures that enable teachers to know students and their families well are associated with increased student achievement, more positive feelings toward self and school, and more positive behavior.[11] Typically this is achieved by restructuring teaching and grouping assignments so that teachers work for longer periods of time with a smaller total number of students, for example, by teaching a core interdisciplinary curriculum to one or two groups of students rather than a single subject to five groups, and/or by teaching the same students for more than one year.

In smaller schools or "houses" within a school, students may work with the same group of teachers and advisors over several years, thus making students' and teachers' work less fragmented and disjointed. This enables a more holistic view of students, and a more in-depth approach to teaching and learning. In short, successful schools focus on more powerful and more coherent learning for all students, in settings that are structured as learning organizations for adults and students alike.

Although these strategies require creative rethinking of staffing, scheduling, and personnel assignments, they do not cost substantially more money.[12] The greatest barriers to these kinds of changes are the forces of conventional thinking and the geological dig of regulations and work rules that currently define the parameters of schooling. Many schools that have substantially restructured their work exist on waivers from various state and local requirements governing uses of time and personnel, facilities, and the organization of curriculum and teaching. Until these regulatory obstacles are removed, widespread change is unlikely to occur.

Despite the fact that they must exist "against the grain," schools with these features show much greater levels of student success. These include schools affiliated with the Coalition of Essential Schools in New York City that have graduation and college enrollment rates of over 90 percent for students often considered "at risk";[13] Philadelphia's charter schools;[14] and schools associated with restructuring initiatives in Louisville, Kentucky; Hammond, Indiana; Dade County, Florida; and Southern Maine.[15] Their outcomes should not be surprising, since teaching involves much more than conveying subject matter to passive recipients. Effective teaching requires knowledge of students, their experiences, and the ways in

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which they learn. It also requires continuing opportunities for teachers to learn from one another, to evaluate the outcomes of their work, and to invent new practices.

The idea that teachers should be involved in planning and evaluating their own work confronts Tayloristic job structures and the "trickle-down" theory of knowledge prominent in bureaucracies. Structures and assumptions that de-skill teaching are well established in school systems that have sought to standardize and simplify jobs through age grading, tracking, and specialization, and that have created elaborate administrative and supervisory structures for designing and overseeing the work in each cell of an elaborate organizational matrix. Expertise is presumed to reside at the top of the system and is used to design work specifications (curricula, textbooks, and tests, and decision rules for grading, promotion, and grouping of students, etc.) for routine implementation.

Such an approach can work when tasks are predictable and unvaried. However, teaching is not this kind of work. Teaching decisions are many; teaching strategies must be continually adapted to different subject areas, learning goals, and student approaches and needs. To teach successfully, teachers must have both the knowledge about teaching and learning needed to manage the complex process of getting diverse students to learn well and the discretion to practice variably rather than routinely. Successful education can occur only if teachers are prepared to meet rigorous learning demands *and* the different needs of students.

This is not the conception of teaching that has informed US policy. In contrast to other industrialized countries, teacher education in the United States has been thin, uneven, and badly underfunded. Schools of education are typically funded less well than any other school or department on campus, and school districts spend less than one half of 1 percent of their resources on staff development, as compared to 8 to 10 percent of expenditures in most corporations and in other countries' schools. As a result, many US teachers enter the profession with inadequate preparation, and most have very few opportunities to enhance their knowledge and skills over the course of their careers.

Despite this unevenness, teacher education makes a substantial difference when it is available: Dozens of studies have found that

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better prepared teachers are more effective with students[16] and that the single most important determinant of student achievement is the quality of teachers and the extent of their knowledge about teaching and learning.[17]

School systems in Germany, France, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Japan invest in a greater number of well-prepared, well-paid, and well-supported teachers, rather than in a large bureaucracy populated by non-teaching staff hired to manage, inspect, and control the work of teachers. Teacher education and ongoing professional development are much more extensive in these countries than in the United States; substantial time for learning and collegial work are built into the school day; and teachers make most school and curriculum decisions.[18] This is fiscally possible because classroom teachers comprise 80 percent of the education employees in these countries, as compared to under 50 percent in the United States.[19] By investing in large administrative superstructures to control the work of teachers rather than in teachers themselves, we have sucked resources out of classrooms where they could make a difference.

The importance of transforming teaching is becoming ever more clear as schools are expected to find ways to support and connect with the needs of all learners. Responsive teaching cannot be produced through teacher-proof materials or regulated curricula. In order to create bridges between common, challenging curriculum goals and individual learners' experiences and needs, teachers must be able to develop learning experiences that accommodate a variety of cognitive styles, with activities that broaden rather than reduce the range of possibilities for learning. They must understand child development and pedagogy as well as the structures of subject areas and a variety of alternatives for assessing learning. And they must have a base of knowledge for making decisions traditionally reserved for others in the educational hierarchy.

The implications for teacher education, licensing, and advanced certification are many: Teachers will need to be prepared to teach for understanding and have a deeper knowledge of their disciplines and their students. They will need to be prepared to address the wide range of languages, cultures, learning styles, talents, and intelligences that children bring with them to school. They will need to look at and listen to children, and be knowledgeable about

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how children learn and develop, in order to understand what their students know and can do, as well as how they think and how they learn.

This will require major investments in preservice and in-service teacher education and major transformations in the way teachers are recruited, licensed, hired, inducted, certified, and supported. Teachers will need more rigorous and tightly coupled theoretical and clinical preparation in schools of education, preferably in graduate level programs that provide sustained internships integrated with coursework. They will also need job-based professional development opportunities that involve them in collegial planning, curriculum work, and study throughout their careers. Hiring more teachers and fewer administrative staff will provide more time for teachers to learn and work together and more resources for their professional development. In restructured schools that have done this, teachers have large blocks of time for joint planning and professional development as well as for a wide variety of professional roles as school leaders, mentors for beginning teachers, and curriculum developers.

These changes must be supported by more meaningful standards for teacher licensing and more sophisticated and authentic assessments of teaching, such as those developed by the new National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium.[20] States like Vermont, Indiana, Maine, and Ohio have begun to enact policy changes in teacher education, licensing, and ongoing professional development that will ensure that there are highly-qualified teachers in every classroom. Meanwhile, school networks in New York, Philadelphia, and elsewhere have begun to provide models of schools structured for teacher and student learning.

Their efforts will be strengthened by improvements in salary structures, working conditions, and recruitment incentives that will entice qualified teachers into all teaching fields and all communities, rather than lowering standards wherever shortages occur. The chronic shortages of teachers in fields like mathematics, science, and special education have undermined education in these fields for decades, just as the hiring of tens of thousands of unqualified entrants has undermined the education of children in poor rural and urban areas.

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Finally, in contrast to the dramatic inequalities in school spending that characterize this country, other industrialized nations fund education centrally and equally, thereby ensuring an even starting point for their students and the capacity for all districts to hire well-prepared teachers. On this equitable foundation, they build smaller, more personalized schools staffed with highly competent teachers whose work is organized to allow them to know and teach students well. These schools attain higher standards of student learning for more students because they focus on what makes a difference: the relationship between knowledgeable teachers and their students in a supportive, caring environment. That is what we must do if we are to invent schools that will help all students learn well.

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Roger Soder

American Education: Facing up to Unspoken Assumptions

AFTER THREE DECADES OF WORK in K-12 schools, higher education, alternative education, voucher plans, and educational administration, listening to many of the arguments and discussions about American education still makes me feel like I am walking into the middle of a play—attentive to the current action, only dimly aware of context and motive, uncomprehending of the larger structure. Perhaps my own uncertainties and inabilities create the muddle, but I continue to find that discourse about American education is tinctured by unspoken assumptions about the problems and prospects of American education. In this essay I offer an attempt to discover context and motive through an outline of two fundamental claims, one about the basic purpose of American education, the other dealing with basic change strategies, along with a brief consideration of the implications of those claims.

THE FUNDAMENTAL PURPOSE OF SCHOOLS

Schools have many functions, but their fundamental purpose is to teach students their moral and intellectual responsibilities for living and working in a democracy. It is not to be efficient, effective, or accountable, nor is it to prepare docile, unquestioning workers who will go blindly into roles assigned them in the great struggle to dominate the world economy, or, in the words of Tocqueville, to be a "flock of timid and hardworking animals."

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To talk of the fundamental purpose of schools is necessarily to talk first of the fundamental purpose of society: to assert what it means to be human. To be human in a democratic society is to be free and to be capable of making conscious, responsible choices. A democratic society requires that the people shall judge; schools must teach them to judge wisely. I am talking here about something more than allegiance pledges and national anthems. I am talking about rights, responsibilities, and critical skepticism.

What is the necessary relationship, if any, between the American democracy and a free, common, public schooling system? There are currently many propositions for privatization, vouchers, and charter schools. Proponents argue for these propositions in terms of efficiency, libertarianism, and Adam Smith. But if there is a necessary relationship between democracy and public schooling, then surely this relationship needs to be considered before we proceed with further dismantling.

Given the fundamental moral/political function of schools, teachers are moral and political agents, not merely technicians passing along subject matter. The articulation and acceptance of the fundamental function of schools changes drastically the way we frame our talk of teacher preparation. Programs that focus on the acquisition of subject matter knowledge or classroom control do not address this fundamental function.

If not mastery of subject matter, then what should be the preparation (both pre-ed and in professional programs) of the intending teacher? What does it mean to be an educated person in a democracy? It may be argued that these concerns are, as a matter of course, dealt with in schools and in teacher preparation programs. But analysis of data from the Center for Educational Renewal's comprehensive national study of the education of educators, detailed in numerous technical reports, articles, and John Goodlad's *Teachers for Our Nation's Schools,* suggests that there is little, if any, systematic attention to the moral and political agency of schools and teachers, or to the moral and political context of American schooling.

BASIC STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE

There must be simultaneous renewal of schools and education of educators. We will not have better schools until we have better

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teachers, but we will not have better teachers unless we have better schools for teachers to learn and practice in. Such a claim implies that *both* schools and teacher preparation programs need fundamental change. If this is true, there is no point in trying to make teacher preparation programs fit what schools are currently doing.

It might be argued that it is difficult enough to try to change either schools or teacher preparation programs without taking on both at one time. But it is precisely because we have separated renewal efforts over the last century that neither has been very effective. The best teacher preparation program cannot overcome the "this is how we do things here" mentality that greets new teachers. On the other hand, a K-12 school that is renewing itself should not have to be faced, again and again, with overcoming the effects of an outmoded preparation program. There must be an iterative and simultaneous process by which K-12 schools and teacher preparation programs work toward the renewal of both.

CREATING CENTERS OF PEDAGOGY

In consideration of these two fundamental claims, three major groups of people must come together to form a center of pedagogy: arts and sciences faculty, college or school of education faculty, and K-12 faculty. The center of pedagogy must have protected boundaries and a protected budget, as well as a clearly identifiable faculty. Centers of pedagogy, including the creation of professional development schools involving all three parties, go beyond the many (and welcome) interactions of those in higher education and the K-12 system. Such individual interactions are useful pedagogically and often have positive public relations benefits, but they do not address the creation of institutions for simultaneous renewal. Such centers of pedagogy are currently the focus of the National Network for Educational Renewal, linking some twenty-five universities, one hundred school districts, and more than three hundred partner schools committed to the simultaneous renewal agenda as outlined in John Goodlad's *Teachers for Our Nation's Schools* and *Educational Renewal: Better Teachers, Better Schools.*

The creation of sustained institutional relationships in centers of pedagogy forces the examination of two critical issues. First, cen-

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ters of pedagogy must be funded in ways currently unavailable either to the K-12 system or to higher education. In every state, K-12 funding is separate from higher education funding; little support can be found in either set of institutions (or in legislatures, for that matter) to use monies from one budget line to support the other. New ways must be found to fund these new kinds of institutional relationships. We cannot depend on the goodwill of individual educators to staff centers of pedagogy and partner schools, nor can we depend, in the long run, on temporary extramural funding.

Second, the relationship between higher education and K-12 systems cannot be allowed to become so close that the university loses its identity and its purpose. The purpose of the university in a free society is to provide a critical place to stand, and a critical vocabulary. If, in the name of good relationships and partnerships with K-12 systems, the university loses its critical voice and perspective, then the university will no longer be a university but merely a state training institute. At the same time, we must consider matters of education beyond the schools, the arts and sciences, and education departments, and move toward consideration of educative communities and full service schools.[1]

CONCLUSION

The above claims are conclusory. They cannot be otherwise. In the end, their attractiveness depends not on positivist proof, nor on goals, standards, effectiveness, efficiency, bottom lines, accountability, and other such terms in which we mistakenly couch our talk, but on what we want to say about what it means to be human and what we say is the nature of a just society. After 2,500 years, Sparta and its schools and sentiments still offer the greatest temptations and the greatest warnings to us as we reflect on schools and their purposes and problems. Sparta's schools had clear goals and standards, and they were accountable, effective, and efficient. But, as Aristotle said of Sparta, "To say that a state has trained itself in the acquisition of power with a view to ruling its neighbors—that is no ground for calling it happy or applauding its lawgiver." We must never lose sight of the motive behind the changes we seek for our schools.

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The problems of instruction today are different from what they were a decade ago; they are likely to become even more different if the Theses with respect to access and certification, suggested above, are realized. Thus, for example, the struggle to familiarize students with their past, to locate them in time and place, is not likely to be achieved by demonstrating a link with a European past, or even with an African or Asian past. One of the many experimental approaches to undergraduate education might be to dwell on those elements common to modern societies, at the same time indicating what makes them distinct and separate. Modernity may best be studied on two levels: what unites the planet and what divides it. It must not be assumed that the latter are mere residues—political, religious, and philosophical ideas of an earlier time—destined soon to be placed on the ash-heap of history. These are integral to modernity, no less so than the technology too often seen as its only distinctive hallmark. An approach that concentrates on man's twentieth-century experience should not mean that only the twentieth century is studied. The spiritual and material fantasies of our time cannot be disassociated from their roots. The concern must be with interpreting and understanding modern man's political and social predicament, seeing these in a context that takes account of his psychic and spiritual needs.

Thesis 31

If some of the aridity of primary school education derives from the sex-typing of teachers who are overwhelmingly women, a comparable problem arises in university education where the professoriate is overwhelmingly male. Major efforts to recruit a greater number of women professors ought to be initiated. The academic profession would be substantially transformed by an infusion of such new talent.

Thesis 22

From "The Assembly on University Goals and Governance"
Dædalus 104 (1) (Winter 1975)

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Paul D. Houston

School Reform Through a Wide-Angle Lens: The Consideration of Context

EDUCATION REFORM IN THIS COUNTRY is off-base because we keep trying to fix the wrong problem. We assume that the problem lies within the school and that by "fixing" the school we can fix the problem. A great deal of time and effort has been spent trying to improve upon what we have historically done in school and finding better ways to measure this. This is based on the assumption that schools are failing children. But bad assumptions make bad policy. It is our society that is failing our children and we must look at this issue more broadly; we cannot fix the schools outside of their societal context. As Ernest Boyer reminds us in a recent Carnegie report, we cannot have islands of academic excellence in a sea of community indifference.

Until America is willing to consider the context within which schools exist as a part of the problem, our efforts at reform will fall short. Creating "standards," "benchmarks," or "outcomes" is useful. We need to know where we are going. Moving towards more authentic assessment makes sense. But before trying to go somewhere else, we need to better understand where we are now. I was once told by someone who worked on a ranch that cattle could never be fattened by being weighed, they had to be fed. Likewise, assessing children's performance does not make them achieve more. Yet, much of our reform effort in this country has revolved around the idea that we can "weigh" children into better performance. Instead, we must convince children, and those who serve them, that we understand their problems and are willing to support them in dealing with those problems. This does not mean

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that we expect less of those who have difficulty; it does mean that we must recognize that some need more support than others to reach the goal.

Those who make policy in this country, and those who must carry it out in the classroom live in two different solar systems that are moving apart at the speed of light. We must find ways to connect the "top down" strategies with the "bottom up" strategies and create mechanisms for improving children's lives outside of school.

The condition of many of the children in this country is horrendous. This is particulary true of children living in inner cities and rural communities. The poverty rate for children is increasing dramatically: more than one in five children is now living in poverty. America's child poverty rate is three times the average of other industrialized countries. A generation ago, the poorest in our society were the elderly. Today, children are six times more likely to be poor than the elderly. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) report, *The Progress of Nations,* attributes this to the "failure of tax and transfer policies to mitigate poverty to the same degree [in the United States] as in other industrialized countries."[1]

Poverty is an economic problem, but it has tragic human overtones. Each year ten thousand children in the United States die as a direct result of living in poverty. Christopher Dodd, Democratic Senator from Connecticut, has suggested that whether we look at the poverty rate, immunization statistics, or school readiness, it is plain that many children are growing up in an environment that completely thwarts success in life. Violence towards children has escalated dramatically: three children a day die of child abuse. Over the last thirteen years we have lost eighty thousand children to gun deaths, thousands more than we lost during the twenty-five years of the Vietnam conflict.

And what has been our policy? We have had none. We have failed to develop a national children's policy and this has led to some very strange outcomes. Our pets have a better chance of being inoculated than do our children; we spend more money on cat food than we spend on textbooks. Under President Bush, we developed a national goal that called for all children to come to school ready to learn. But he and his successor have done nothing

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to raise the estimated thirty billion dollars it would cost to implement that goal.

Meanwhile, the schools must cope with the reality that our children have gone from a world of "Leave it to Beaver" to one of "Leave it to Beavis." In 1960, when "Leave it to Beaver" was popular, about 60 percent of American families resembled the Cleavers; they had a working father and a mother who stayed home to tend the children. Today nearly one-half of our children are "latch-key kids."

In addition, schools are very disconnected from the changing nature of the workplace, just as employers are very disconnected from the changing environment of children. Employers cannot understand why schools are not turning out a better product, and schools have not kept up with the changing demands of the workplace. The skills that many jobs require call for a much more sophisticated worker than was necessary on the factory floor. Even doing the same job today is more complex then it was a generation ago. In 1960, 20 percent of the jobs in this country required a high school education. Today, 80 percent require it.

Merely raising standards will lead to failure and frustration. Connections must be made between the two realities. What is needed is a much more realistic assessment of the needs of children and a commitment to meeting those needs.

To achieve this, I believe we need an investment strategy. An "investment trust fund" could be created that would go towards providing a minimal base of support for prenatal and postnatal health care, nutrition, and family support. This "investment trust" could come from a national payroll tax; a fraction of 1 percent could raise between twenty-five and thirty billion dollars a year. This money could then be turned back to communities, on a formula basis for distribution, to support the most needy children. This would allow schools to concentrate resources on changing how they deliver education.

Suggesting a payroll tax at this particular time may seem naive. After all, the nation is focused on deficit reduction. However, it is time that we invested in the future of our children. Developing such a concept will take time, and gaining adequate support for passage will take even more time, but we should not wait to begin the process.

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Once we have taken care of the basic needs of children, we must concentrate on changing our schools. Schools are doing a better job than ever of carrying out their historic mission. The problem is that it is the wrong mission. We are still treating children as if they come from the Cleaver household and are going to work on the assembly line. We must train a different kind of child for a very different kind of world. This calls for a radical transformation of the schools into personalized places that provide for different learning styles, and that connect to the real world of work.

We must empower those working in schools to carry out the task at hand. Strategies of deregulating and moving decisions closer to the child are appropriate, but we must continue to provide "scaffolds" of support. Merely trying to reform one school at a time throws schools to the vagaries of conditions outside of their control and breaks down any opportunities for synergy. Most importantly, we as a nation must join in a crusade for our children. It must involve a commitment on the part of schools to change to meet the reality of a different world, and it must involve a commitment on the part of society to shoulder some of the responsibility for supporting children. We must move away from talking about "those" children and "my" children and begin talking about "our" children. Anything short of this kind of commitment dooms schools to failure in contending with the context the children bring to us.

ENDNOTE

[1]United Nations Children's Fund, *The Progress of Nations* (New York: UNICEF, 1993).

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Stephen R. Graubard

We Need to Know More

FOR THE WHOLE OF ITS RECENT HISTORY, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and its quarterly journal *Dædalus* have been engaged in a continuing study of education at every level. Those who have written on the subject in the last three and a half decades include a remarkable roster of men and women, scholars in a great variety of academic disciplines, but also practitioners who have taught in or administered both public and private schools and universities. To cite the issues where education has figured prominently would be to make a list of perhaps a third or more of all *Dædalus* issues; to name the authors who have written for these issues would be to provide a "who's who" of individuals who have made learning and teaching a principal concern. It is not entirely an accident that out of the hundreds of essays published in these years the one written by the late Dr. Lewis Thomas, "Biomedical Science and Human Health: The Long-Range Prospect," which appeared in the Summer 1977 issue entitled "Discoveries and Interpretations: Studies in Contemporary Scholarship," may be the most apposite to this issue, concerned as it is with the education of America's children. The whole essay merits reprinting but the final paragraphs may suggest why it has a particular relevance for this study at this time in the nation's history. Thomas writes:

> These ought to be the best of times for the human mind, but is not so. All sorts of things seem to be turning out wrong, and the century seems to be slipping through our fingers here at the end, with almost

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all promises unfilled. I cannot begin to guess at all the causes of our cultural sadness, not even the most important ones, but I can think of one thing that is wrong with us and eats away at us: we do not know enough about ourselves. We are ignorant about how we work, about where we fit in, and most of all about the enormous, imponderable system of life in which we are embedded as working parts. We do not really understand nature, at all. Not to downgrade us; we have come a long way indeed, just to have learned enough to become conscious of our ignorance. It is not so bad a thing to be totally ignorant; the hard thing is to be part way along toward real knowledge, far enough to be aware of being ignorant. It is embarrassing and depressing, and it is one of our troubles today.

It is a new experience for all of us. Only two centuries ago we could explain everything about everything, out of pure reason, and now most of that elaborate and harmonious structure has come apart before our eyes. We are *dumb*.

This is, in a certain sense, a health problem after all. For as long as we are bewildered by the mystery of ourselves, and confused by the strangeness of our uncomfortable connection to all the rest of life, and dumbfounded by the inscrutability of our own minds, we cannot be said to be healthy animals in today's world.

We need to know more. To come to realize this is what this seemingly inconclusive century has been all about. We have discovered how to ask important questions, and now we really do need, as an urgent matter, for the sake of our civilization, to obtain some answers. We now know that we cannot do this any longer by searching our minds, for there is not enough there to search, nor can we find the truth by guessing at it or by making up stories for ourselves. We cannot stop where we are, stuck with today's level of understanding, nor can we go back. I do not see that we have a real choice in this, for I can see only the one way ahead. We need science, more and better science, not for its technology, not for leisure, not even for health or longevity, but for the hope of wisdom which our kind of culture must acquire for its survival.[1]

Those words resonate and have meaning, and may possibly be as important for education and schooling as Thomas believed them to be for medicine and health. If, in his view, "the beginnings of modern medicine began somewhere in the mid-1930s," with cures becoming available then largely through the introduction of science into medicine, the earlier discovery, made in the 1830s, "that the greater part of medicine was nonsense" was the essential

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preliminary for this scientific revolution. "For century after century," Thomas wrote, "medicine got along by sheer guesswork and the crudest sort of empiricism." There was nothing very scientific about the medical enterprise. Thomas termed it "the most frivolous and irresponsible kind of human experimentation, based on nothing but trial and error and usually resulting in precisely that sequence." In his powerful and vivid prose, Thomas wrote: "Bleeding, purging, cupping, the administration of infusions of every known plant, solutions of every known metal, every conceivable diet including total fasting, most of these based on the weirdest imaginings about the cause of disease, concocted out of nothing but thin air—this was the heritage of medicine up until a little over a century ago." Thomas concluded: "It is astounding that the profession survived so long, and got away with so much with so little outcry."[2]

No one would argue that education—defined in the broadest terms to include schooling and a great deal else—has had an equally dismal history. The civilizations of the last three thousand years would never have developed as they did had education been simply "frivolous." Yet, Thomas, insisting that medicine required "about fifty years of concentrated basic research" to reach a level that would allow an earlier pessimism about therapy to be laid to rest, knew that it depended ultimately on "the realization that disease could be turned around by treatment, provided one knew enough about the underlying mechanism." This seemingly simple proposition made possible a totally new medicine, able to cure some of the most common and deadly human ailments. Thomas, in his own lifetime, saw as the "direct outcome of many years of hard work, done by imaginative and skilled scientists," the creation of "a bank of information, ready for drawing on when the time for intelligent use arrived."[3] A comparable "bank of information" does not today exist for those who are concerned with education. To create it will require extraordinary effort. If, in Thomas' words, "We have already become in the Western world, on the record, the healthiest society in the history of humankind,"[4] no one would venture to say that we have also become the best educated. That, in fact, ought to be the prime national objective, but it will not be achieved by political rhetoric, vouchers, or the privatizing of education for children whose parents are able to

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avail themselves of that option. The proposition that serious study is called for, of a kind not being pursued today, does not imply that we should wait fifty years to learn what we need to know. If, as Thomas argues, "it is now possible to begin thinking about a human society relatively free of disease,"[5] it ought to be possible to start thinking about a society free of the ignorance and violence so characteristic of our own, so common in modern societies.

To do either, however, will require undertakings of a kind no private or public institution is today prepared to make. It calls for a commitment to both theoretical and applied research, to a willingness on the part of major foundations, universities, and individual and corporate donors to fund educational research not likely to have immediate "payoffs," that may involve betting on "surprise." If Thomas was right in believing that "there is a very high probability that whatever astonishes us in biology will turn out to be usable, and useful, tomorrow,"[6] can something of the same thing not be said about the studies of children and their education? Such research can never be concentrated in a handful of disciplines or faculties, nor can it take place principally in schools of education. If it conscientiously addresses issues of student motivation, taking seriously the task of studying both incentives and sanctions—how each operates in the lives of young people today—it will go far beyond anything that now exists. The constant reference to "community" conceals our ignorance about the reality of what were once thought to be vital and functioning institutions, that have been fundamentally transformed in this chaotic and fast-moving century. The rush to conclusions based on insufficient data must be resisted. Because educational research is so often local—national at best—it must become something that is a great deal more. Only through genuine international collaboration—based on more than a simple comparison of test scores—can the fundamental cultural and social differences of modern societies be rendered with some exactitude. There is today much more comparative data than is realized, but the data is not being sufficiently used. Too many argue as if schools are in a position to control everything; in fact, they are able to control only some things. Those who imagine that policy and politics ought to be the principal items on the agenda of all educational research exaggerate the importance of the things they are interested in. Until we

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understand better how children's interest in learning is fostered, why so many are turned off, and how the socially privileged, even when they are indolent, are protected while the others are lost, we risk creating an underclass more violent and deracinated than the one that now exists.

The standards movement, with its objective of "aiming high," has to be commended. Still, the competitive mode, however useful in certain enterprises, may be deleterious in education if it is not joined to a counseling effort that makes the teacher more than a "coach," a respected tutor and mentor in the best sense of the terms. Measuring "skills" is always difficult; recognizing new ones and giving them something other than a very nominal value is an urgent task today. Schools will not be greatly changed by exhortation. The revitalizing of the teaching profession, like that of law, medicine, or any number of the other professions, is an immensely complex task. It is also an urgent necessity. All such efforts must be based on a kind of inquiry uncommon today, because teaching is so often conceived in terms that are nostalgic when they are not utopian or self-regarding. To see that the study of the brain is relevant to the education of children and not simply to the cure of aged men and women suffering from Alzheimer's disease, to understand that the study of the school is the study of a "social organism" quite as complex as any other in contemporary society, whether it be a business firm, a political party, or a legislature, is to accept what Thomas argued, that we do not know enough about ourselvelves. Worse, we do not know enough about the institutions we inhabit.

To achieve that understanding, it will be essential to recognize the connections between the theoretical and the practical, to see how much the knowledge of many disciplines will be necessary. In education reform, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary inquiry is not only very desirable, it is mandatory. In the American democracy, no new solutions of any significance will be acceptable in the absence of firm support by an enlightened citizenry that understands what is at stake and why the conditions that now exist cannot be perpetuated.

The philanthropy of another age, vested in bodies that want to prove themselves useful, may be insufficient to support the kinds of inquiry that now cry out for long-term attention. Wholly new

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kinds of intellectual efforts need to be made, perhaps involving a very substantial reconfiguration of what certain established institutions can be called on to do. If the education of children is to receive the attention now given to senior citizens—and the two ought not to be seen as adversaries contending for a fair share of the same pie—wholly new institutions may need to be invented. If there is an urgent need for new educational research that goes beyond anything now commonly pursued—if we are only in year one of anything that can be called an "educational revolution"—the first objective may have to be the destruction of any number of traditional dogmas. Doing this in today's political climate will not be easy. Arguing for theoretical research when only the "practical" is thought to have value will demand intellectual "venture capital" of a kind that is not readily available. Childhood waits to be seen in new dimensions; so, also, does adolescence; so, also, do learning and teaching; so, also, does the nature of American society, so riven and so seemingly unwilling to confront certain harsh realities. Optimism will not replace pessimism as long as the practical, down-to-earth, and pragmatic—all terms used by Thomas—are thought to reside in quick fixes, to be achieved by the year 2000 or shortly thereafter.

ENDNOTES

[1]Lewis Thomas, "Biomedical Science and Human Health: The Long-Range Prospect," *Dædalus* 106 (3) (Summer 1977): 170–71.

[2]Ibid., 163.

[3]Ibid., 165.

[4]Ibid., 169.

[5]Ibid., 168.

[6]Ibid., 169.

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The Convocation Report and the memoranda it inspired began to circulate beyond the group assembled in Cambridge soon after they were set into galley. One of the happy consequences of that distribution is that several individuals not present at the Convocation indicated their wish to write brief comments of their own. We are pleased to publish the first of these, by Carol Gluck, hoping that in time we may publish others.

Carol Gluck

Had I One Wish

GRANT ME ONE WISH TO CHANGE THE SCHOOLS, and I would not ask for more or better content, for smaller classes or longer school years, for sager teachers or saner parents, or even for more money. I would ask for student skills.

My qualifications for making this request are only semiprofessional at best. I teach history to smart students at a good college, who, it is often said, know less when they graduate from secondary school than their counterparts of years past. In fact, I think they have more knowledge. But they can do less. They seem to have everything going for them except a practiced sense of how to go about an academic task: where to start, how to proceed, when to stop. For years I have been teaching some of these skills to both undergraduate and graduate students in extracurricular workshops I call "craft sessions," which include everything from how to take notes to what makes for a punchy last sentence. The sessions work like magic, though there is no magic in it. For a long time I thought this was just remedial liberal arts, making up for changes in sec-

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ondary education that had taken a toll in research papers unassigned and grammarians lost.

Then I became a transpacific parent, and, after several year-long stays in Japan, I realized something stunning had happened to our sons. They were still red-blooded American boys, with unimpeachably messy rooms and a robust immunity to scholastic seductions, but they had acquired a practiced sense of organization and self-discipline that ran through everything they did. Without their knowing, or showing it, their work habits had been Japanized. In elementary school Japanese children are taught to "chunk" tasks into parts, to organize their notebooks, to notice details, never to skip steps in math problems, to follow procedures to get from point A to point B, all the more when B is an unknown. In short, they are taught *how to learn*. They are also taught to organize themselves, so that remembering their rucksack becomes their own "responsibility" in the first weeks of the earliest grades. It is a matter of discipline—not of a moral or social sort, although there is altogether plenty of that in Japanese schools as well. We used to call this study skills.

I am not—emphatically not—advocating that the United States imitate Japanese education. The social regimentation and the exam-centered dryness suit neither our ideas nor our style. Instead I am suggesting that the signal difference in Japan is not the number of days in the school year, the high math scores, or the school uniforms, but the daily dose of old-fashioned how-to, the training in being trained.

We used to teach this in American schools. It was the American way. In many cases, in what are now considered the bad old days in elementary education, such skills were nearly all that was taught. In my public school days, half of the left side of the report card showed the subject grades, and the entire right side, which was much longer, listed the "habits" considered necessary to learning, divided into three categories: social habits, work and study habits, and health and safety habits. "Work and study habits" judged whether the student "comes prepared for work, uses careful methods for work, completes work on time, keeps profitably busy, cares for material and equipment." (I had particular trouble with keeping "profitably busy" because I whispered all the time.) We had teachers like Miss Marble, noted mostly for her wig, or Mrs.

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Chapman, who disappeared to the back of the classroom every day to paint her fingernails. But they were strict about the "careful methods for work." It was rote learning, boring details, tedious routines, to be sure, but school—and life—is like that. And knowing how to get from point A to point B prepared generations of children to manage tasks in the classroom and, later, in the workplace. They may not have known about the Civil War—I didn't—but they had a better chance of knowing how to find out about it if the need ever arose. And if the need never did arise, they could use their skills for other things, notably on the job, where American workers were once considered tolerably trainable.

Work habits are socially neutral. Everyone, from the inner city to the outer reaches, can learn them. They do not inhibit, nor are they inhibited by, diversity of cultural background, and they can do their job independent of the so-called breakdown of the American family. They are not hard to teach either. They are best learned early, from kindergarten through sixth grade. Visit a first-grade classroom in Japan in April, which is the beginning of a child's elementary school career, and watch how even the most rudimentary (new) habits are formed: "put the milk bottle in the center of the desk (so that it will not be knocked over)"—it takes three days before every milk bottle sits in the middle of the desk, not to be mentioned again. I see nothing subversive or oppressive in such a habit, which would have spared me many a spill. More important, we know that the youngest children welcome structured tasks: it gives them what we now psycho-habitually call a sense of control. And the real payoff of feeling in control comes in the tough years of "transescence" in middle school or junior high, by which time the strategies for task-tackling are ingrained.

Of course it is seldom as smooth as all this, and of course elementary school educators worry about "skills" all the time. But perhaps we have put too many colors on the pedagogical palette: we want content, interest, engagement, and students "thinking for themselves." I think of it as the dinosaur effect—all those second graders who can pronounce "triceratops" but might be better instructed to write their letters over and over again on the line. Skills, in the acquiring, may be uninspiring, but once possessed they are liberation itself.

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I am not urging a return to bygone days, but a reevaluation of priorities. I have the greatest respect for America's classroom teachers, the greatest scorn for conservatives today who focus on standards and basics and prayer without regard for the real crisis in the classroom, and the greatest hope for the children, who, if given both the chance *and* the training, can in an almost literal sense do anything they set out to do.

Had I one wish, I would turn all the three-horned dinosaurs into three-ringed notebooks, the content standards into this-is-the-way-one-does-it learning, and the lower grades into kingdoms of skill.

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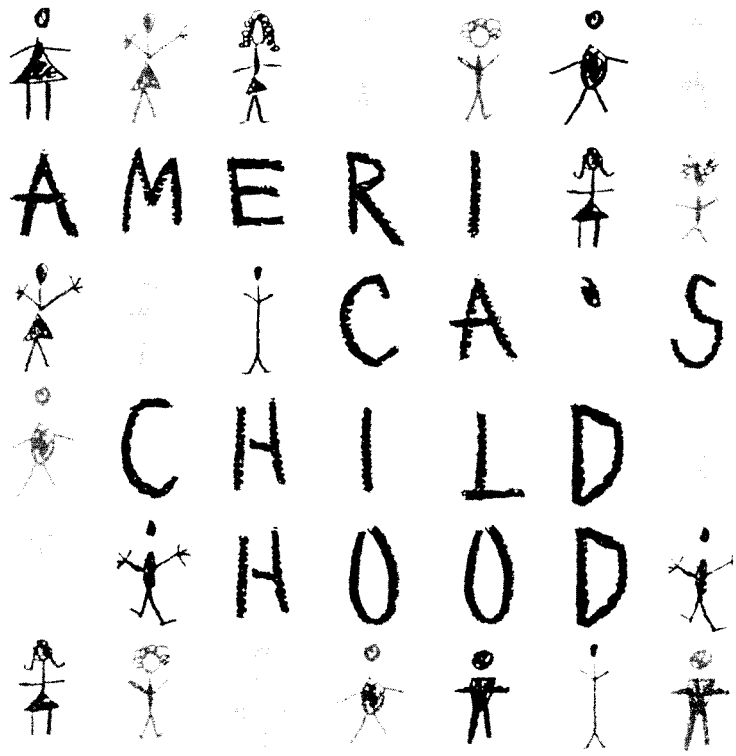

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